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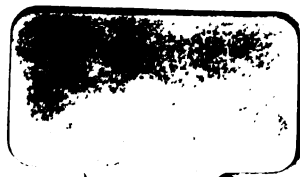
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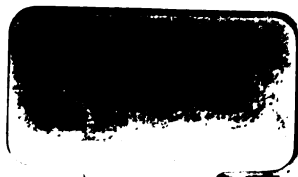


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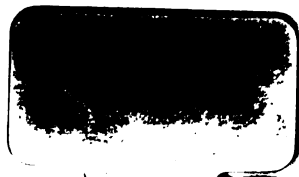


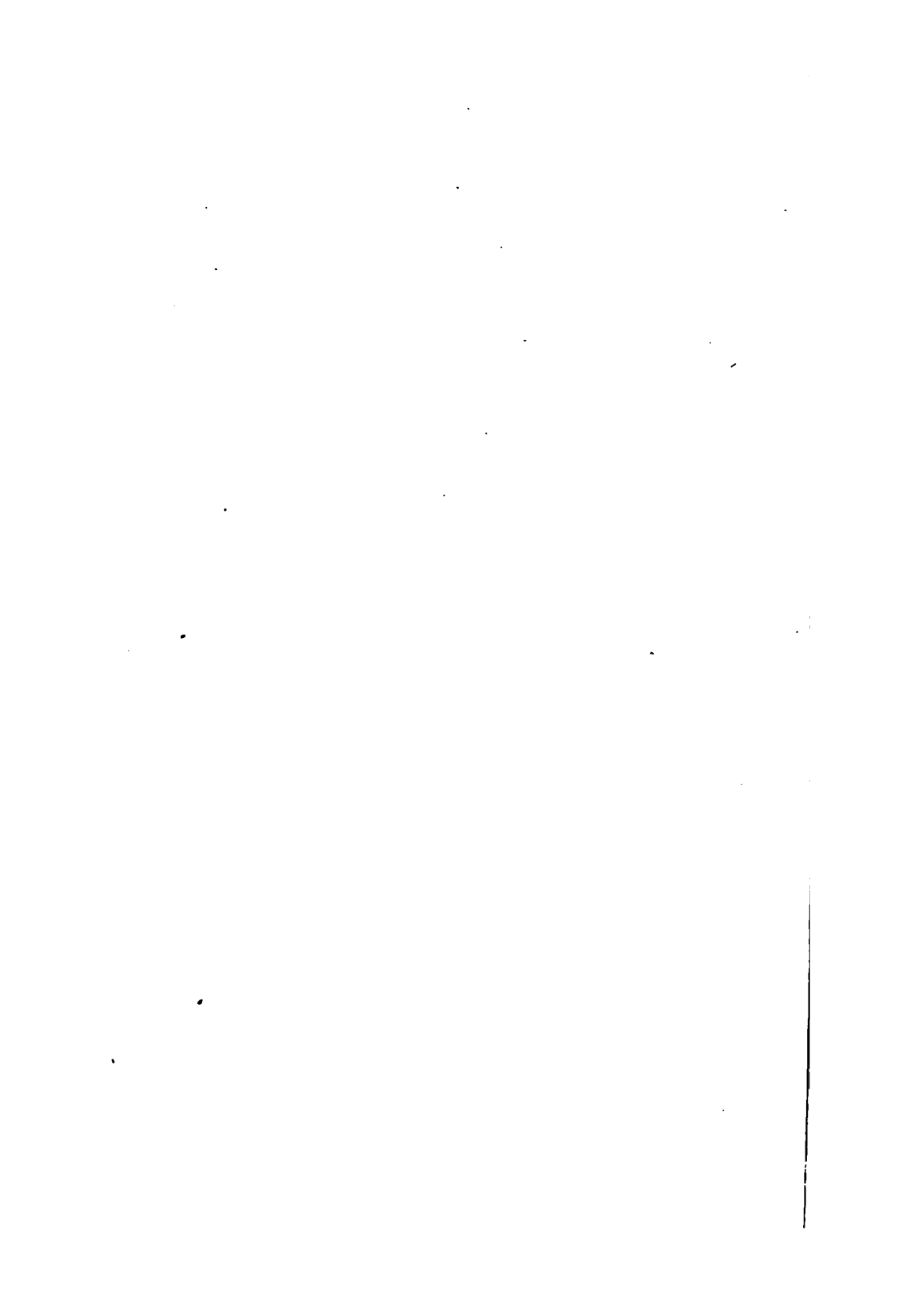
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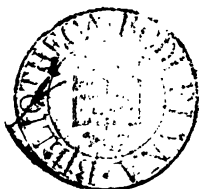




A
NOVEL WITH TWO HEROES.

BY ELLIOTT GRAEME,

AUTHOR OF "BETHOVEN: A MEMOIR."



IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.

"Why did she love him? Curious fool! be still;
Is human Love the growth of human Will?"—BYRON.

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1872.

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A NOVEL WITH TWO HEROES.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MAN IN SPECTACLES AT HOME.

MR. TOOKE inhabited a red-brick house in the High Street of Tredhill. As a rule, the High Streets of seaport towns are not inviting, and the one in question was no exception to the rule; for Tredhill, although boasting not only a railway station, but a monster hotel (whose attractions had never yet proved sufficiently powerful to induce one passenger by the said railway to remain an hour longer in the town than was absolutely necessary), in all minor matters, and especially in those relating to sanitary details, lagged very far behind the times.

The Red House was not only distinguished as being the residence of one who might have out-rivalled Whittington, had he chosen, but with its handsome portico, and massive, substantial walls, it fairly bore the palm from all the other edifices in the street. Truth to tell, although it was kept in countenance by several prim, wooden-fronted dwellings,

whose yellow blinds were continually closed with an austere gentility that baffled prying eyes, the greater number of the tenements were given up to the purposes of trade, and from the odour pervading the entire street, we were led to suppose that the articles dealt in suffered from a peculiar liability to decay, it being difficult for even an experienced nose to decide whether stale fish or sickly apples were most rapidly approaching the stage of decomposition. When the sun shone, swarms of neglected children struggled, quarrelled, and paddled in the gutters; unkempt, uncombed, unwashed mothers pared potatoes and gossiped at their doors, thus prudently combining business with pleasure; and at frequent intervals groups of bronzed, weather-beaten men with the lounging gait and do-nothing aspect of Jack ashore, indicated as plainly as did the Marvellous Mermaid on the Blue Anchor swinging above their heads, the existence of a superabundance of the vile dens where the British tar enjoys for a brief space luxuries denied him on board ship, and is eased of the spare cash won by months of toil. When it rained, ducks took the place of the children, and pigs, of their fathers and mothers, and perhaps of the two the brute nuisances were to be preferred, for their quacking, grunting intercourse was more tolerable to Christian ears, than the racy vernacular, interlarded with oaths and sea-slang, which did duty as Queen's English with the natives of Tredhill.

After studying the High Street in its varied aspects by day and night, a stranger would be inclined to ask, with a sigh of mingled wonder and disgust, what Mr. Tooke could possibly see in it that he should continue to live there month after month, year after year! It was, perhaps, the very fact that he *had* lived in the old house month after month, and year after year, which made the lawyer cling to it so obstinately, in spite of the efforts of his clients to induce him to remove to one of the more fashionable and commodious residences lately built outside the town. It was in the Red House that he had begun his career; many a time as a boy he had swept down its steps, and painted to himself with longing fancy the Elysium of the best parlour, into which (from economic considerations) his hobnailed boots were refused admittance; many a time he had vowed to himself that before he died, he too would be owner of such a house. And although this object of ambition had long since been attained in a way that surpassed his wildest dreams, he could not summon up resolution enough to break the old ties, and forsake the scene of his obscurity and poverty.

There, but a stone's throw from his dining-room window, was the veritable wooden porch into which his poor mother had so often stepped, pausing for a moment in her occupation of binding shoes, to gladden her eyes with the sight of him ascending the front steps at the Red House, returning to the old

father in the arm-chair by the fire with the solemn prognostication that their Jim would "be a gentleman yet, bless him!" Directly opposite was the superb emporium at which he had bought his first tail-coat—a marine store whose dingy show of second-hand pea-jackets, sou'-westers, and water-proof overalls, darkened one window, while the other displayed tempting treasures in the shape of ancient Dutch cheeses, kegs of butter, and suspicious-looking sausages intended for the special delectation of the foreign element in the floating population. A few yards off lived the chronometer-maker (an elderly man when he was a boy, and consequently a centenarian now) who had supplied him with the self-same green spectacles which he still wore, and to whose secret power in his heart of hearts he could not help attributing a certain measure of his success in life. Beyond that again was the well-filled butcher's shop, drawing out the lease of which had been the first work whose profits went directly into his own pocket; and at the bottom of the street stood the grey, venerable church where, on a snowy winter's morning, he had made "the prettiest girl in Tredhill" his wife, and in whose adjoining graveyard his old parents slept the last sleep.

Thus, you see, the long, narrow street, which to us conveys no ideas beyond those of a monotonous, repulsive cast, holds within itself the several rounds of the ladder by which the errand-boy mounted to fortune, and it is naturally replete to him with

interests in which we as strangers cannot possibly share. The only claim the High Street has upon our attention is the fact that Mr. Tooke's continued residence in it proves a point of difference between him and many of the class to which he belonged, who are for the most part only too eager to leave behind them every reminiscence of a humble origin. But although so far devoid of ambition for himself, the lawyer was not, as we have already seen, equally moderate in his views for his son; and his chagrin would have been excessive, had he suspected that Edward also had a partiality for the old house (possibly because it lay in the very midst of those for whom he laboured) which might induce him in the end to settle down quietly there, instead of seeking to "better himself" by shifting to a more eligible quarter.

It is on a chilly March evening that we first ascend the spotless steps of the Red House, and finding our way uninvited to the snug parlour behind the apartment consecrated to red tape and iron safes, technically designated "the office," discover the Man in Spectacles relaxing himself in the bosom of his family. Could the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Screw, who has but a few hours before entrusted to the Oracle the management of a hydra-headed difficulty known as "church rates," behold with us the vision which presents itself to our gaze, his clerical slumbers would be somewhat disturbed by doubts as to the

propriety of his choice of a solicitor: for—tell it not in Gath!—with the laying aside of spectacles and umbrella, Mr. Tooke has in some inexplicable way lost that awe-inspiring aspect which has been known to dart conviction of the terrors of the law into the heart of the most sturdy and unmanageable of Independents; and, in dressing-gown and slippers, lounging in an arm-chair, with wig pushed back for greater ease, appears—must we confess it?—a very insignificant little mortal indeed.

Opposite to him, in the companion arm-chair, and enveloped in shawls (although a large fire is burning), sits a pale woman. It is easy to discover from whom Edward has inherited the beautiful expression which illumines his plain features at times, for it lends an indescribable charm to the wasted face in the arm-chair, and proves that Mr. Tooke may not have been altogether mistaken in his boast regarding the wife he had secured; for despite a long illness which has ended in her becoming a confirmed invalid, Mrs. Tooke's is still a countenance that no one can look on without pleasure, without experiencing a soothing sense of tranquillity, so quiet and restful is its soft light. Edward's mother was one of Nature's ladies. Without the slightest assumption in manner or bearing, both were such that a stranger, after passing an hour or two in her company, might reasonably have been excused a little incredulity when told that she was originally a

milliner's apprentice, and that her school education had been strictly confined to the barest knowledge of reading and writing. The long-continued ill-health that debarred her from more active pursuits, and left her with abundant leisure for reflection, may not have been without its influence in moulding and developing her character; but at the same time, in innate refinement of thought and feeling she was far superior to her husband, who, to do him justice, regarded her with an ardent, almost poetic affection, and had even been heard to describe her as the "good angel of his life." Between the mother and son, there existed a sympathy rarely found even in that relationship.

This evening Edward is at the table by the lamp surrounded by books; before him his desk, on which his arm rests, supporting his head (a favourite attitude of his while studying), and this prevents us from seeing whether the few months have wrought any change in him. For some time no sound was audible—save one which, coming from the vicinity of Mr. Tooke, leads to the inference that the Nose, freed from the repressive influence of the Spectacles, was indemnifying itself for the day's restraint by emitting at regular intervals a defiant snort, which might possibly have been a still greater shock to the sensitiveness of the Rev. Mr. Screw—as being a most unbusiness-like proceeding. A sudden, loud knock at the street-door broke the stillness; it was followed

by the instantaneous collapse of the newspaper he held in his hand, and Mr. Tooke awoke with a start.

"Cap'n 'Awkesworth, sir, to see you on business," announced the maid, popping her head in at the parlour door. "I told 'im as 'ow you wouldn't see no one to-night, sir, but 'ee won't take no denial, bein' very pressin', as 'ee says."

"Tell him I'll be with him directly," said Mr. Tooke, yawning, and preparing with no very good grace to leave his comfortable quarters, "and, Molly, fetch me my coat first.—What the deuce brings him here to-night!" he muttered, as he threw aside the *déshabille* in which he would on no account have exhibited himself to the gaze of the world. The wig adjusted, the slippers exchanged for boots, and the dressing-gown for a garment of orthodox shape, the final touch was administered by the beloved barnacles, and Richard looked himself again—alert, vigorous, baffling, inscrutable. All the loose coin of the realm in the pocket of recalcitrant Baptist or Independent in the parish of Tredhill might have given a despairing leap as Mr. Tooke emerged from the privacy of domestic life, and entered the gloomy office within whose mysterious precincts we will not presume to follow him.

After his departure silence reigned in the parlour, but from time to time Mrs. Tooke paused in her knitting to steal an anxious, wistful glance at her

son. Presently she said, "Have you not studied enough for to-night, Edward? Come and tell me about that poor woman Ellis."

"I will, mother, directly, but there is something here I must finish first," replied Edward without looking up; and the knitting-needles continued their soft click-click, until the sound of voices in loud and angry discussion in the next room caused the gentle hands that held them to let them fall with a start of mingled surprise and alarm.

"What can be the matter?" said Mrs. Tooke anxiously. "Edward, don't you think you ought to go in?—the Captain is so hot-headed. You might appear to be looking for a book."

"There is no cause for alarm, mother," Edward replied soothingly, as he stooped to pick up the needles. "Father does not like to be interrupted when a client is with him."

Mrs. Tooke could make no reply to this, but the knitting-needles plied their work with nervous velocity. In a few minutes the office-door opened; some one strode hastily through the hall and went out, slamming the street-door behind him with a force that shook the house. After a little delay, Mr. Tooke reappeared—but not again to subside into forgetfulness and ease. His countenance wore an abstracted, thoughtful air, as he slowly seated himself on the edge of a straightbacked chair, and warmed his hands over the bright blaze.

what of that?'—'Just this, Captain,' says I, 'that you have a confounded impudence to come here and discuss with me the probabilities of Sir Robert's early demise. I'd like to know what you mean by't?'—'Mean by it?' returns he, getting as red as a turkey-cock—for he saw that he had mistaken his man; 'what should I mean, but that, ten chances to one, Robert will not live to see twenty-one?'—Well, with that, Nance, I began to get hot—his coolness put me out—and I said, 'If anything *does* happen to your cousin, Captain Hawkesworth, I will not forget this conversation.'—'What the unmentionable are you driving at?' says he in a fury; 'do you dare to imply——.' 'I imply nothing, Captain Hawkesworth,' said I coolly, for, as he got hot, of course I took the other tactics; 'I only say that I will not forget the hints you have favoured me with. And allow me to tell you, that I sincerely hope you will never have the opportunity of running through a *third* fortune.' He turned pale with rage, said all the abusive things he could think of, and, amongst the rest, that he would expose me to his uncle as a 'sneaking scoundrel;' that was the expression he used—'a sneaking scoundrel!' 'Very good, Captain,' said I, 'and what about this *debt of honour*? Will you also mention that I refused to give my name to the bill, as being in direct contravention of your agreement with him, dated August the fourteenth?' I had him there. He stopped for a minute, perfectly

astounded; then he stammered, 'What do you know of that agreement?'—'Never mind what I know,' I replied; 'I will make no mean use of my knowledge, Captain Hawkesworth, unless you force me to it.' He sat for a minute or two, biting his nails with mortification, for he saw that he had put himself in my power, but he was too proud to speak me fair. At last he said, 'Tooke, if you do not endorse that bill, I am a ruined man—everything will come to the Rector's ears. I give you my word of honour that I will never ask you or any other man to do it for me again. Will you assist me?'—'Not in this way, Mr. Tom,' said I—kindly enough, for with all his faults you can't help liking the Captain: 'your uncle has always placed confidence in me, and I cannot play a double game. I will do my best to bring the matter in a favourable light before Mr. Chesney, and perhaps *he* may be induced to assist you.'—'Tooke,' says he, starting up, 'you said just now that if anything happened to Robert, you would remember my words? *Take care you don't have to repent your own!*' and when he had said that in a kind of reckless, *hissing* way that positively held me motionless with amazement, he flung out of the house. If it wasn't that, with all his grand airs, I think Mr. Tom is too fond of life to leave it of his own accord, I'd really feel nervous about him. It's to be hoped he don't go on like this at home—he'd frighten his wife out of her senses."

"Dear little soul!" said Mrs. Tooke, with a sigh, "I fancy she has no easy task with him, although she never utters a word of complaint."

"This affair of the bill accounts for a good deal," pursued Mr. Tooke, not heeding the interruption. "I could not understand before where the money went to. Of course, for what Mr. Tom's been brought up to, his present income is nothing. Still, we'd have thought £200 a year a small fortune when we started in life, eh, Nance?"

"But the children!" represented Mrs. Tooke considerably, "four little mouths to feed, besides their dress and shoes."

"Well! but I'm glad the saddle is laid on the right horse at last," continued Mr. Tooke, meditatively balancing the poker on his fore-finger, "more than once the Captain has hinted to me, that it was his wife's mismanagement that was at the bottom of his troubles."

"Did he say that? did he *dare* to say that?" said Mrs. Tooke, firing with a sudden flash of indignation that caused the poker to fall from her husband's astonished fingers, while Edward exclaimed with a laugh: "Why, mother! mother! don't excite yourself! What *is* the matter?"

"*Matter*, Edward!" retorted Mrs. Tooke, who in reality seemed roused to an unwonted pitch of angry feeling, "I wonder at you! When you went about their house last Christmas, attending their little boy,

did you see any proofs of mismanagement?" (It may here be remarked, *en passant*, that in order to qualify himself better, according to his notion, for the somewhat peculiar walk in life he had made his own, Edward had studied for a period of eighteen months at one of the London medical schools—not for the purpose of taking his degree and becoming a regular practitioner, but simply with the view of extending his influence among the class for whom he toiled. He had contrived in this way to render Mrs. Hawkesworth an unobtrusive, silent kindness by attending a sick child.)

"Well, I don't know what you ladies would call *mismanagement*," replied Edward, reflectively; "but, in *my* opinion, Mrs. Hawkesworth is so good a manager, that there's never the least fuss or bustle when she's about, and that's the grand *desideratum*, in a sick nurse at least, and her house always appeared to me in apple-pie order, as you would say, mother."

"*There!* I knew that!" said Mrs. Tooke triumphantly, "and a better mother never breathed.—I can testify to that, from the appearance of the children; poor as the material of their dresses is, they always look as the Captain's children ought to do."

"Well, well, Nance!" returned Mr. Tooke, amazed at the unexpected storm he had evoked; "but for all that, Mrs. Hawkesworth may not understand that

two and two make *four*. She might expect them to make *five*, Nance, my dear!"

"If you mean that Mrs. Hawkesworth spends lavishly, James, I'll just let you into a secret, that came to me (I'm ashamed to say) through the char-woman whom we both employ. I did not think her gossip worth noticing at the time, but since the Captain has the meanness to lay his own sins at the door of his wife, the truth ought to be known, and that is—that with all his professions of retrenchment and economy, he has no more idea of self-denial than—than the babe unborn."

Never had Mr. Tooke seen his wife so angry.

"*She* dines at two o'clock with the children on—I don't know what—rice-milk, probably; *he* must have a seven-o'clock dinner of several courses, with every delicacy in its season properly cooked and served. They have only one servant, as you know, and consequently, who cooks my lord's dinner but Mrs. Hawkesworth! and sits down afterwards to make a feint of taking a bite with him, just to keep up appearances!"

"Why, Nancy! you've quite taken up the cudgels."

"So would you, James, if you'd seen what *I* saw, replied Mrs. Tooke, the knitting-needles driving at a furious rate. "They both came here together the other day; he went into the office, she stayed to chat with me a little, working away all the time at a

baby's dress she was making. I tell you, James, it went to my heart to see her, on that bitterly cold day, in an old summer frock and a thin mantle—with that cough of hers too! He came in to fetch her—very pleasant and gentlemanly, as he always is; but, do you know? I couldn't bear to look at him in his comfortable, handsome overcoat; while she, poor thing, was shivering by his side, all the time trying to look unconcerned."

"No doubt she is better pleased to see *him* well dressed than if she were clad in velvet from top to toe herself," said Mr. Tooke.

"No doubt she is!" repeated Mrs. Tooke, with sarcastic emphasis. "She's a *woman*! Ah, James!" she continued, "if you had acted so to me in our time of struggling, where should I have been now?—Not here to stand up for poor Mrs. Hawkesworth."

Mr. Tooke blew his nose, wiped his glasses, cleared his throat, and replied: "Well, Nance, that's neither here nor there, you know, in the present case; for I don't believe there ever was a wife like you, and perhaps if the Captain had been lucky enough to get *you*, he would have known how to value you too!—But as I say, that's not to the point. The question is, how to help her without offending him? It don't do, you know, to send doles to them, as if they were paupers."

"Certainly not!" replied Mrs. Tooke, pausing in

her work. "This knitted shawl is for her; they couldn't refuse to accept a piece of my own work. It won't be very grand; but it is pretty, and it will help to keep her warm of a morning when she goes with the children on the beach. As soon as they were gone that day, I sent Molly out to get the wool for it, and she shall have it to-night, bless her! and a good plumcake for the children. *Mismanagement*, indeed! after squandering her fortune."

"Come now, Nancy!" expostulated Mr. Tooke, "if you sleep a wink to-night after working yourself up in this way, I'm a blind beetle!—But just send up half-a-dozen of that old port along with the plumcake."

"I'll wait for that until I get a chance of telling Mrs. Hawkesworth it's for *her*—not for *him*," said his wife emphatically. "I wonder the Rector and Miss Alice don't take more interest in her, and come over oftener to see her and the children."

"The bill explains that too," said the Man in Spectacles. "Mrs. Hawkesworth don't give 'em any encouragement. Depend upon it, she's afraid of letting out some of his precious secrets.—Halloo! Ned, my boy," as Edward rose suddenly. "Not going out so late, surely? It's just supper time!"

"I must go, father," replied Edward, piling up his books. "I promised widow Ellis to see Jack safely past the Anchor."

"It seems to me, Ned, that, if, instead of preaching

up the Fifth Commandment to others you'd practise it a little yourself, it would pay better in the end," remarked Mr. Tooke, irritably.

"Don't wait supper for me after ten, mother," said Edward, whose past experience showed him the futility of endeavouring to convert his father to his views of life. "The boat may be in already—if so, I shall be back in half an hour; but don't wait;" and he quitted the room.

"If he's gone after young Ellis, he won't be back before eleven or twelve," grumbled Mr. Tooke, once more ensconcing himself in the easy-chair. "These shareboats are always late."

The anxious expression with which Mrs. Tooke had looked at her son several times during the evening returned painfully as she said,—

"Now that we are alone, James, I want to talk to you about Edward. My mind is not easy about him. Have you noticed how thin and pale he has become lately?"

"Have *you* noticed how often he has gone over to Ilmington, lately?" said Mr. Tooke, mysteriously.

The knitting dropped from his wife's grasp, as she exclaimed,—

"James! you don't mean—Miss Chesney?"

"That's just what I *do* mean, Nancy," responded Mr. Tooke, nodding his head and rubbing his hands with an air of intense satisfaction. "You ask me to give a name to Ned's ailment, and I answer—*Alice!*"

In these five letters you will find the gist of the matter:—*a* for *annoyance*—that's Sir Marmaduke; *l* for *languishing*—that's brought on by the five mile between them; *i* for *irritation*—that's the Rector and his possible objections; *c* for *caprice*—that's what all lovers have to endure; and *e* for *ennuyee*—he don't know how to pass the time, away from her. Now, just fancy a young man suffering from such a complication of disorders—annoyance, languishing, irritation, caprice, and ennuyee,” and Mr. Tooke checked the symptoms with his five fingers, “and you wonder that he's thin! The wonder to my mind is, that he's got any flesh on his bones at all.”

To Mr. Tooke's surprise his wife did not smile at his unusual jocularly; on the contrary, her face became rigid with a serious gravity, and she did not utter a word.

“Yes,” he went on, suddenly relapsing into seriousness also; “he's fairly smitten by Miss Alice, and I've my own reasons for believing that the attachment is reciprocal,—re-cip-ro-cal, Nance!” said Mr. Tooke, pausing between each syllable to give due effect to his communication.

Still Mrs. Tooke did not speak, her worst fears for Edward had never taken this particular form, and, for a moment, she felt stunned by the suddenness of the blow. Read in the light of her husband's intelligence, a thousand little incidents, trifling in themselves, assumed significance; and she could not

doubt that Mr. Tooke's assertion was correct. As she mechanically went on with her work, dropping more stitches than she made, she asked herself again and again, with a bitter pang of self-reproach, how she could have been so blind? How she could ever have imagined that interest in his old charge was the sole attraction at Ilmington—that it was for the mere purpose of talking Italian that he rode over so often? Not the least painful of the thoughts conjured up by this new idea was that *she*, she herself, had been mainly instrumental in plunging Edward into this misery, for she had persuaded him, times without number, to go to the Rectory when he would rather have remained at home (had she but let him take his own way!) under the impression that the society he met there would rouse him and dissipate his timidity—and this was the result. Not for a moment would Mrs. Tooke allow herself to take her husband's view of the case, and imagine that a union between Alice and Edward was possible—her woman's tact represented to her the disparity of position in a very different light from that in which it appeared to Mr. Tooke's obtuser perception; and, as she reflected on her son's sensitive nature she trembled for the consequences of a disappointment.

"Well," said Mr. Tooke, after a time, with a curious glance at his wife, "you don't seem to like the notion of a daughter-in-law; but, you know,

you can't expect to keep Ned to yourself all your life."

"It's not that—it's not that, James!" she replied, hurriedly.

"What is it then? Don't you approve of his choice?"

"You know what I think of Miss Chesney," said Mrs. Tooke, with a reproachful look; "she's a sweet young lady, and he will be a happy man that gets her," this with a sigh; "many a time when I'm sitting here alone, I find my thoughts drifting back to that last illness of mine—in the autumn—the dream I had of an angel about my bed, and the waking to see Miss Chesney's beautiful figure (her back was to me) bending over the table, arranging the fruit she had brought me, so that it should tempt me when I awoke; and then, when the bright, sweet face turned, it was like a sunbeam in the room."

"Well, mother!" responded Mr. Tooke, rubbing his hands with glee, "just think! was it *before* or *after* she knew Edward, that Alice came to see you?"

"James!" said his wife, suddenly, leaning forward and placing her hand upon his, "I implore you to dismiss all thoughts of this marriage from your mind; and if you have encouraged Edward in the idea, undeceive him at once."

"Undeceive your grandmother!" said Mr. Tooke (a process which would have been somewhat difficult of accomplishment, seeing that the good lady had not

been accessible to mortal tongue for the last twenty years). "What on earth do you mean?"

"Think of the difference in rank, James! her connections and his! her home and his! Do you believe the Rector would give *his* daughter to *our* son?"

"As to his home, Nance," said Mr. Tooke, complacently surveying the parlour, "it's not to be despised. You seem to regard the Rectory as a palace; but I can assure you it's a queer, draughty, old-fashioned sort of place, and anybody with a turn for rheumatism had better keep out of it. But let me tell you a secret, Nance, *enter-nous*, you know,—that house will be Ned's one day!" and Mr. Tooke met his wife's astonished glance with so unaccountable a succession of nods and winks, that the poor woman began seriously to fear lest the Oracle's schemes should have proved too much for his brain. "Ask me not how this is to be accomplished," continued Mr. Tooke in a semi-tragic way, adding in his natural tone, "but set your woman's wit to work, and secure the first step of the edifice—that's Miss Alice."

Mrs. Tooke was too much confounded by her husband's evident wish for the match to be able to reply, and he continued:

"The Rector may be proud to get such a son-in-law! Talk of Sir Marmaduke! Does Sir Marmaduke know Latin—Greek (checked off in the

usual way)—French—Hebrew—German—Italian—Mathematics? Can Sir Marmaduke set a song to music, and a whole congregation a-crying? Could he preach a sermon like that Ned delivered before the Judges up at L——, brimful of larning? Could he administer cordial to both body and soul, like our Ned?—Answer me that, Mrs. Tooke! *You* know, and *I* know, and the Rector knows (and trust Miss Alice for knowing too), that there's not a young man like the Rev. E. T. Tooke within fifty mile," with which eloquent peroration Mr. Tooke, senior, rounded his argument, and betook himself to his newspaper, leaving his wife more anxious and unconvinced than ever.

CHAPTER XIX.

EDWARD.

ON leaving the house, Edward walked rapidly down the High Street, and turned in the direction of the beach. The fishing-boats landed their cargo at a small wooden pier, a few minutes' walk beyond the town; and thither he repaired at a brisk pace, fearing that he might be already too late to anticipate the landlord of the Mermaid. When he arrived upon the shore, however, not a living creature was in sight, and the fishing quay (before the completion of the commodious harbour the busiest spot in Tredhill) appeared deserted.

Edward stands for a moment looking towards the sea, and as the light of the oil-lamp suspended above the door of the old boat-house falls upon his face, we perceive that Mrs. Tooke's anxiety was not altogether unfounded—a wan, worn expression about the mouth and eyes tells its own tale—life has not gone smoothly with the young missionary since we last saw him, for, judging by appearances, six years, instead of six months, might have been the intervening space.

Drawing out his watch, Edward murmured, “Half-

past nine! they can't be long now," and began to pace the firm damp sand between the boat-house and the cliffs to the right, partly for warmth, partly because the mere physical exertion was a relief from the pressure of his own thoughts. It was a sharp, cold evening; the wind came howling in sudden gusts round the corner of the boat-house—now causing the rotten timbers of the old quay to groan and creak, now sending the clouds scudding across the sky with a threatening velocity, obscuring for the moment the faint beams of the moon, and mocking their efforts to pierce the changeful veil. "The wind is rising," thought Edward, pausing in his walk to look out for the expected light, while the monotonous dash of the waves against the cliffs sounded in his ear like the sullen roar of a caged beast. No vessel was in sight, and he resumed his measured tread with some anxiety for the toilers on the sea.

This, however, was soon swallowed up in the painful tempest of thought concerning himself—in the effort to solve the one problem which presented itself to him, without ceasing, night and day—Did Alice Chesney love him, or did she not? a problem whose solution was rendered doubly hard by the existence of another even more vital: Was he a free agent?—Was he at liberty to win the love of any woman?—At times Edward felt as if his very existence hung upon the answer to the first doubt; again, he would ask himself, with a shuddering remorse,

what part or lot had he—called and consecrated to the Work—in human love or earthly happiness? The very change that had, to his own consciousness, taken place within him, since the Sunday on which he had first seen Alice, seemed fraught with consequences the most stupendous to himself. Where was now the silent, deep peace, that, but a few months before, had been the underlying secret basis on which his life-hopes and plans rested? Where the strong, penetrating joy that thrilled his inmost soul with a sense of unutterable happiness in those bygone days—how far away they seemed now!—when to “spend and be spent” was his highest aim, when the whole world seemed as a fleeting shadow in comparison to the great realities that encompassed him?—Gone, gone! as it appeared to him, for ever. In their place nothing but the yearning dissatisfaction—the sickening alternation between hope and fear—the torturing question: Does Alice love me, or does she not?

It is with an unwilling hand that we attempt to draw the veil aside, and reveal dimly the conflict that raged in Edward's heart, that consumed his energies with the burning of fever. Who shall presume to analyze or lay bare a struggle in which the most terrible powers of the soul are engaged—the nature stirred to those hidden depths accessible only to the one pitying Omniscient gaze?

Edward's was, in the literal sense of the term, a

single mind. A complex intellectual existence was impossible to him; no dual interest could reign in his breast; talent, ability, energy, opportunity, every element in character and life, must be made subordinate to one grand, all-absorbing end. Hence, his love for Alice Chesney (involving, as it appeared to do, a complete divergence from his chosen path) presented itself to him in the light of a temptation. God or mammon, Divine love or human love, one or other it must be, for both claims could not maintain ascendancy over him. Yet he was no ascetic—witness his affection for his mother; and if the matter had been put before him in the course of ordinary pastoral work as an abstract question, he would have had no difficulty in deciding at once that marriage was not only an honourable but a desirable state—for *others*; but that *he* should crave for a human love, should voluntarily seek to entangle himself in worldly affairs, was the point which grieved and amazed him—which caused him to wish at times, in the bitterness of his soul, that the issue of the contest might be taken out of his hands, and Alice placed for ever beyond his reach, by marriage with some one else. This was no contradiction; it was the natural result of the workings of a somewhat peculiarly constituted mind—morbid, if you will, none the less sincere in its self-inflicted pain.

Edward's talents had not gone without recognition.

More than once he had been offered a cure of souls very different, in a worldly point of view, from his present one; and he knew that he had only to signify his wishes, to be placed in possession of an income that might enable him, without presumption, to ask Alice from her father. The vision of a Future brightened by her constant presence shut out for a time the other side of the picture—the misery of Tredhill, the increase of vice, the relapse of the few whom he had plucked as brands from the burning, the labour of years undone—but only for a time. Edward was too true, too faithful to his real nature, to desert the work which he believed had been committed to him; but while the struggle lasted, it was intense. It almost seemed to him as though the creed of the Parsees might, after all, be right, and the soul only the battle-ground of conflicting spirits; his bad angel assumed the form of Alice; and yet—and yet—he *must* go to Ilmington, he could not tear himself away.

Absorbed in his own thoughts, Edward had not noticed the approach of footsteps, and was therefore somewhat startled to hear his own name pronounced in a well-known voice, and on looking up to recognise the familiar face of Captain Hawkesworth. “Can you spare me a few minutes, Mr. Edward?” said he. “I am in deep water, perhaps you may be able to help me out. Your reputation for amiability is not strange to me.” The manner in which these words

were jerked out, rather than spoken, proved that they cost the Captain an effort.

"Certainly," replied Edward, with an instinctive knowledge of what was to follow. "If I can be of any service to you, Captain Hawkesworth, you may command me."

"Mr. Edward," began Tom, nervously, "I have just been to your father. I—I am rather awkwardly placed at present. A bill for £100 falls due to-morrow, and, owing to unforeseen delays, I have not the means of meeting it. Under these circumstances, I applied to your father for a temporary loan, which he refused—refused, I may say," continued the Captain, pointedly, "in a way that added insult to injury.—I do not complain of that. My fortunes are changed now—any one may throw a stone with impunity at a dead dog; but this money is all-essential to me, Mr. Edward; without it I am a ruined man, disgraced, dishonoured. May I beg you to use your influence with Mr. Tooke to procure it for me?"

Edward paused for a moment in mingled amazement at the allusion to the "insult" received, and sorrow that Alice's cousin should be reduced to play a part so unworthy. At length he said: "From what my father has told me of his position with regard to your uncle, Captain Hawkesworth, I fear it will be impossible for him to give you assistance in money matters."

Captain Hawkesworth bit his lip: "Will *you* lend me this paltry sum, Mr. Edward? I ask it only as a loan. I am nobody at present; some day, perhaps, I may be able to repay a kindness tenfold."

"If I had the money," said Edward, "I would willingly let you have it; but, with the exception of a small stipend, hardly sufficient for my own wants, I am absolutely dependent on my father."

The Captain was silent for a moment: "Then you will not advance this sum?"

"I *can* not," said Edward, "it is not in my power, otherwise you should be heartily welcome to it."

With a muttered apology for troubling him, Captain Hawkesworth turned towards the cliffs, and in a moment was out of sight. Edward had hardly recovered from the perturbation caused by this incident, when the arrival of the smack, and a crowd of spectators, interested or curious, recalled his attention to the object that had brought him to the spot. Approaching the boat, which was rapidly being unloaded, he inquired if Jack Ellis was on board.

"Nosey!" called out the man of whom he had asked the question, "here's t' parson wants you!"

"Wot do t' parson want here this time o' night, a pokin' hisself into everythink, as if we war agoin' to cheat t' customus?" responded the individual addressed as *Nosey*, a tall, broad-chested fellow of herculean build.

"You fool, it's Mr. Ed'ard!" said the first speaker. Nosey looked up from his load with a start.

"Why, Jack, have you forgotten me in three days?" said Edward, smiling.

"I ax yer pardin a thousand times, Mr. Ed'ard," replied Nosey, jumping ashore, with a pleased look on his heavy, but not unintelligent features; "I thought as 'ow it might be t' old genelman. He's got so fearful suspecious lately; nothink won't make him b'lieve but wot we're all bent upon *doin'* t' rivenue; it's enough t' make——"

"I, have some news for you, Jack," said Edward, cutting short Nosey's reflections on Mr. Screw.

"All right, sir, come this way!—I'll be back directly, mate, I must speak wi' t' parson a minute."

"Look alive, then!" grumbled the aggrieved "mate," thus deserted in the business of transferring the fish to the cart waiting for it; "why can't he keep his *saumonizin'* till Sunday?"

"Well, sir?" said Nosey, eagerly, as soon as they were beyond the possibility of listeners, "an' wot hev you made out? Do he owe me *tin*, or do I owe him?"

Edward produced from his pocket-book a collection of dirty crumpled pieces of paper, on which were scrawled a number of baffling hieroglyphics: "Here are the receipts, Jack; keep them carefully, and on no account allow them to go out of your own possession. Here is also a full statement of the account between

you and the fish-dealer; read it carefully over, then post it to him; and unless I am greatly mistaken you will have a cheque for £20 to-morrow. The fellow has been taking downright advantage of you."

"Wot did you say, Mr. Ed'ard?" said Nosey, scratching his head with a blank inability to appreciate his unexpected good fortune. "Would you kindly say it agin, sir?"

"The fish-dealer in L—— has not settled with you for one-third of the fish you have supplied, Jack," said Edward, slowly, "and consequently is your debtor to the amount of twenty pounds."

"Twenty pound! Law bless us! You don't mean it now!" exclaimed the giant, in amazement; and as the truth finally penetrated his thick skull, his burly sides fairly shook with laughter; he snapped his fingers with a report that made Edward start, and slapped his huge thigh with a force that would have felled an ordinary man.

"Why, Jack, I had no idea you were so fond of money."

"Twenty pound, Mr. Ed'ard! that's as good as a four-poster, an' a chist o' drawers, an' a eight-day ticker to me, ain't it?" replied Nosey, as soon as his delight permitted him to speak intelligibly.

"Well, yes, I dare say you could get these articles for the money," said Edward, with a smile. "Are you going to be married, Jack?"

"Haw, haw! I'll back t' parson agin all England,"

roared the giant, with an exquisite appreciation of the parson's penetration. "Goin' to be married, says he. Haw, haw! Yes, Mr. Ed'ard, I don't mind tellin' you, sir; I *ham* agoin' to git married, an' it's all along o' you, sir. If it 'adn't a bin for you, sir, I'd a bin a batch-e-lor all my days."

"What have I to do with your marriage, Jack?" inquired Edward, a little surprised.

"Jest this, sir. Me an' Polly Waters; you know Polly, sir? t' young 'ooman wi' t' rid cheeks?" (Of course Edward recognised the damsel in question by this exceptional mark.) "Well, sir, me an' Polly hev bin keepin' company, come Christmas, a twel'-month; iver sin' you took me up, Mr. Ed'ard; an' her father,—that's old Waters at t' baccy-shop right agin t' Marmaid, sir,—he's a cantankerous old cur-mudgin as iver sold cabbidge-leaves istid o' baccy; he wouldn't hear o' t' match, not on no account whatsumdiver. Well, sir, p'raps that wa'n't as-toni-shin', seein' as 'ow t' very nose on my face told tales agin me; but some 'ow, Polly, she manidged for to talk him over, an' he promised I should hev her as soon as iver I had a decent home for to take her to. I've got two rooms now choke full of as purty furnitur' as iver you set eyes on, Mr. Ed'ard, and this twinty pound 'll settle t' bizness;" and Nosey relapsed into a fresh burst more alarming even than its predecessors, which came to a premature end on Edward's being seized with a violent fit

of coughing. "Blest if I ain't a 'tarnal selfish chap, a keepin' you here in this nor'-easter, Mr. Ed'ard!" he exclaimed, penitently, "an' blest if I ain't forgot to thank *you*, sir, an' if it wa'n't for you, I'd be no better nor a drunken pig."

"I want no thanks, Jack," said Edward, with a smile, as he shook the rough hand held out to him; "but you'll not go into the Mermaid to-night?"

"T' *Mermaid*!" responded Jack, in scorn; "she an' I hev parted company for iver, sir; a more de-ceivin' old gell than her don't breathe. No more Marmads for me, Mr. Ed'ard! T' day I'm married I'll sign t' pledge."

"That will be the best day's work you ever did, Jack," said Edward heartily, adding, as he turned to go, "Let me see you, and Mrs. Ellis that is to be, at church on Sunday."

"That you may depend on, sir," said Nosey in redoubled ecstasies at "t' parson's wit;" "Missis Ellis wot's to be! Mr. Edward, you *are* a oner!—won't I tell Polly that?—won't her purty cheeks git ridder nor iver! Yes, sir, you'll see us both, and six o' my mates a follerin' us—they'll all be wantin' to try t' parson's 'rithmetic. Good night, sir!"

"Good night," replied Edward, hastening away, not without a secret sense of satisfaction and relief that Jack Ellis was won over at last (although at the

cost of a whole day spent in deciphering the accounts kept by the fisherman in his wild days); for Ellis's big frame and formidable pugnacity of disposition rendered him an important personage in his own sphere, and the sight of "Nosey" a reformed, sedate, member of society would be a powerful adjunct to Edward's preaching.

As the giant returned to his "mate," he shook his ponderous head several times with an air of profound wisdom: "T' parson's t' rummiest cove I iver come across," so ran his reflections. "Blest if I can make him out! He *won't* leave a fellar alone—not if he war to go down on his bended knees. T' think o' t' *cheek* I giv him not so very long ago! an' him a takin' all this trouble for me now!" (another profound shake of the head). "'Spect he's watched us at t' line-fishin'—if one bait won't do, tries another! Any 'ow he's fairly hooked *me*." (Another pause.) "S'pose Saunders an' t' rest o' that lot 'll say, like old Screw, I've gone after t' *loaves an' t' fishes*!" (scornfully) "'cos t' parson's helped me to my own agin! I've no need t' be beholden t' any man. On my Bible oath!" (here he stopped) "I maun't say that now. Wot war't t' parson read t' other night?—Yea, yea, an' nay, nay?—Yes, that's right! I say then, *Nay!* on my Bible oath—keep quiet, will ye?" (an admonition addressed apparently to the objectionable phrase). "*Nay!* I'm no loaf-an'-fish man! Yea, Mr. Ed'ard's done it all hisself! Wi' him a dodgin' an a follerin'

ye, a parsecutin' ye wi' kindness, an' them great eyes o' his'n a lookin' ye through an' through, a readin' ye off as ye war a book, wot's a poor chap to do but ack hon'rabable an' straightforrard? He can't help hisself. He *maun* obey orders, an' Mr. Ed'ard's t' best cap'n as iver *I* sailed under!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE TEMPTER.

CAPTAIN HAWKESWORTH'S experiment of retrenchment at Tredhill was, as you perceive, not eminently successful. He had begun with the best intentions, but at the end of the first four weeks declared, to the consternation of his wife, that during the four-and-thirty years of his previous existence he had never spent "so many dull, wretched hours, as had fallen to his lot in that cursed hole, Tredhill." Nothing to do but the interminable inspecting of the firing from the Fort—no excitement but the languid interest consequent on the descent of a ball a few yards further out to sea than its predecessor—the coming home to the poorly-furnished, confined lodgings—the plebeian domestic details that met his refined eye—the frequent failures of his wife in her efforts to please his epicurean palate—(poor child! she had everything to learn; but a short time before she did not know a gridiron from a frying-pan)—the utter lack of congenially "fast" society—the absence of all that gave, in his opinion, a zest, a charm to life,—the presence of all that was monotonous, dreary,

third-rate, commonplace. Although the proposal for economizing at Tredhill had originated with the Captain himself, it is not too much to say, that if the Rector had meditated on the subject for a lifetime, he could not have devised a better penance for his scapegrace nephew. Tom, in short, wished himself dead a hundred times a day.

True, he made the test more severe than his uncle either imagined or desired, by studiously withdrawing himself from the society within his reach. The Hon. and Rev. Mr. Screw condescendingly invited him to a stately dinner and a still more stately game of chess, an honour which the Captain appreciated so little, that he could not be induced to go a second time. Lord Mickleham's hounds met regularly five miles from the Fort, but Tom did not own a horse, and was too proud to borrow one. The well-stocked preserves at The Cedars were thrown open to him, but Lord Charleswood was too intently occupied with politics to be much of a sportsman, and the Captain did not care to shoot alone. As for the Rectory, Tom liked his cousin Alice, and would often have gone over for a little chit-chat with her, had it not involved the dreadful necessity of appearing not to be bored by his uncle's projected improvements, and astonishing suggestions with regard to his treatment of the men at Tredhill, as if *he* could reasonably be expected to take any interest in the awkward squad under his orders! No! Tom was an un-

fortunate, ill-used man, a martyr to the iron course of circumstances ; and rather than be roused from his sullen despondency, he shut himself up at home, and made his head ache by smoking rank tobacco, while he indulged in the only luxury left to a man in his position—the privilege of snarling at his wife and growling at his children.

Poor little Mrs. Hawkesworth ! Had the Captain been able to put himself in her place for the brief period of three days, his favourite wish would speedily have been realized, for the amount of work that awaited her, morning, noon, and night, might have killed a stronger man than he. Her busy fingers never halted—making, mending, patching, darning, that the children might not offend Tom's fastidious eye. Nor did the active brain know a moment's respite—how to make sixpence do the work of shilling is a problem that demands an immense power of calculation ! Then there was the children's education to be carried on. Tom, junior, was getting quite beyond her simple instruction ; his lessons had to be conned over-night by mamma, that she might not commit herself next day ; of course, it was not to be imagined for a moment that *papa* would stoop to the humdrum work of teaching !

There never was such an indefatigable little woman. Everything devolved on her shoulders, everything had to be thought out and wrought out by her. She was here, there, and everywhere, all in the same

breath : now superintending the rough country-girl who did duty as maid-of-all-work ; now running upstairs on a premonitory scream, to persuade baby to lie a minute longer in her cot ; the next instant diving into the recesses of the kitchen ; again suddenly peeping into the sitting-room to ascertain that the fire burned well, and that all looked bright and cheerful for Tom ; then warning the children to be ready to fly at a moment's notice when the well-known, and shame to say, *dreaded* step was heard, and especially reproving little Dick, who, a regular "chip of the old block," would submit to no inconvenience, and naturally resented the daily demolition of his brick castle, and the consignment of himself and sisters to a dingy back-room, for no other reason than that "papa had come home." The little man even went so far, on one occasion, as to utter defiantly on the landing-place, within earshot of the dining-room, his total disbelief in mamma's fiction of expediency that "poor papa was not well." "When *he* wasn't well," Master Dick maintained stoutly, "he couldn't eat, but papa hadn't left a *bite* of the pudding he saw mamma mating!"—a piece of five-year-old logic which was followed by the angry appearance of papa, and the administration of the hasty box on the ear that constituted the Captain's sole idea of paternal correction.

Yet, despite the struggle with poverty, and the still harder struggle with her husband's depression,

Mrs. Hawkesworth at first was happy. She had faced the reverse of circumstances with a far braver spirit than Tom; her jewels had gone to satisfy troublesome creditors long before he thought it necessary to part with his horses; and now that they were living, honestly, with the prospect of brighter days in store, she fondly imagined their worst troubles over.

Such was the state of affairs during the first three months, and the Rector was perfectly satisfied. Whenever he rode over he always found Tom at his post; and although he seemed to have lost his old flow of spirits, still that was only natural, and a hopeful symptom. True, he would have liked to see more of his nephew; but even Tom's absenting himself was laudable, since, had he gone much into society, the contrast between his present and his former *status* might have induced a return to the old expensive habits; he was, therefore, quite right to keep out of temptation. So reasoned Mr. Chesney. His penetration did not pierce beneath the surface, and he flattered himself that all was going on well.

But for an unlooked-for event, this might have been the case. The first three months naturally formed the hardest part of the probation; after he had become fairly accustomed to the change in his position, Captain Hawkesworth might have decided to make the most of it. He would probably have availed himself of his uncle's stable, and gone to the

Meet with as much *sang-froid* as though he had been mounted on his own property; have shot partridges by himself with as much enjoyment as if there had been a party of keen sportsmen; while his wife would have found a warm-hearted friend in Alice, who had been prohibited from going often to Tredhill until the Rector had, as he said, "an inkling of how affairs were going to turn out;" for Mr. Chesney shared in the belief held for a time by the old lawyer (and probably inspired by the Captain's hints) that, although Tom generously took the whole blame upon himself at first, most of the interesting hero's misfortunes might be directly traced to the extravagance of his wife!

Unfortunately, however, this legitimate mode of spending the two years received an unexpected check in the reappearance on the scene of the worthy Mr. Clayton, who having contrived to disburden himself of the five hundred odd pounds, suddenly recollected the existence of his dear friend the "Cap'n," and considerately came to Tredhill for the express purpose of enlivening that solitude by his amiable presence. Under any other circumstances Bully would most likely have been kicked down stairs in return for his delicate attention; but, after his long isolation, it was a positive refreshment to the Captain to have some one always ready with a joke, or a reminiscence of the days of wild merriment they had indulged in together; some one with

whom, as he elegantly said, he did not "need to mind his p's and q's;" some one, in short, who would submit cheerfully to any amount of snubbing, and who possessed the happy knack of making the Captain feel himself once more a great man, of setting him up again on that pedestal of self-complacency from which it seemed his uncle's aim to knock him down.

This part was played to perfection by Bully. Cringing, obsequious, servile, he made his talents indispensable to his patron, and himself thoroughly at home. Under the influence of the little excitements proposed and carried out from time to time by his follower, Tom speedily recovered his good humour; but Mrs. Hawkesworth realized only too well the deceptiveness of the apparent sunshine, and her dream of brighter days fled as she observed, with painful concern, that Bully's ascendancy over her husband was greater even than it had been in Dunedin, where she had learned to regard him, not without reason, as the author of most of their difficulties.

Mr. Clayton was a master in an art which he was wont, among kindred spirits, to describe as "leading by the nose;" he soon succeeded in causing our friend Tom to dance to whatever tune he piped; and, under his able guidance, what so natural as that Tom should fall back, by imperceptible degrees, into the old grooves of thinking and acting? In paying

his debts, what had Mr. Chesney done that he was not bound to do for his sister's son? What was the use of uncles, especially *clerical* uncles, who ought to be glad of an opportunity to practise the self-denial they preached, if not to assist unfortunate nephews? What right had he to lay an embargo on Tom's expenditure, or dictate a fixed course to him? By Jove! it was not to be endured. It was indeed marvellous, as Clayton remarked, that he had not looked at the affair in that light before; he would get through the rest of the two years in very different style!

By dint of laying their heads together, the Bear and his Keeper soon found means to cheat Mr. Chesney, while the former salved his conscience, if he had one, by repeated assurances that he was adhering rigidly to the letter of the agreement. Tom had solemnly vowed to abstain from billiards, cards, and dice. Very good! Tom, as an honourable man, would keep by that agreement. But he had *not* promised to relinquish *betting*, and the race-course at L—— offered a loophole through which he contrived to outwit his uncle (all negotiations being carried on through Clayton), and enjoy the feverish excitement that had become a necessity to him. It may be questioned whether the game was worth the candle; the worry and anxiety, the risk of detection and disgrace. At times Captain Hawkesworth felt that he was burning his fingers, and the occasion of

his visit to Mr. Tooke was one of those wholesome warnings. He stood on hollow ground, and he knew it.

The church clock struck eleven as he ascended the steps of the corner-house in a prim row, built by some energetic speculator in the vain hope of raising the west-end of Tredhill into the position of an eligible watering-place. His impatient knock was followed by the immediate opening of the door, and a vision of a fair delicate face and girlish figure.

"What, Fanny! still up?" said Tom, in no very amiable tone, as he handed his coat to her, and condescended to thrust his feet into the slippers placed ready for them.

"I have been waiting for you, dear," replied Mrs. Hawkesworth, apologetically; "Mary must go early to bed, that she may rise early. I cannot ask her to sit up."

"There is no need for any one to sit up," rejoined the Captain, sulkily; "we can manage very well. Baby disturbed you last night, didn't she? You had better get to bed. Besides, I have some business to arrange with Clayton. Is he in?" The question was unnecessary, for the mingled perfume of tobacco and rum that pervaded the house gave indisputable evidence of the proximity of Bully.

Fanny's heart sank at the mention of "business" with Clayton; business that she might not hear boded no good, as she knew only too well from past expe-

rience; but exhausted by her long weary day, and many successive nights of disturbed rest, she had no strength to remonstrate. Having quietly placed the supper on the table, and attended to all Tom's wants, actual and conjectural, she went upstairs, not to sleep, but to pace the room with baby, who had arrived at the interesting stage of "teething," and not unnaturally persisted in making her sufferings known in a way that Tom's sensitive ears could not tolerate. During the day Fanny had no leisure for retrospection; perhaps, under the circumstances, this was no misfortune, and in general her bright spirit was not prone to dwell upon the black side of life; but to-night an unaccountable feeling of wretchedness seemed to have taken possession of her. She did not yield to it without a struggle. She accused herself of being the most ungrateful of women. Was there not much, very much, to be thankful for? Was not Tom apparently more contented? Did not the children enjoy robust health? Had they not even some kind friends left?—witness the pretty shawl which kept her and baby so warm. Was not Mr. Chesney's manner softer towards her on his last visit than it had ever been before?

Still, in spite of these comforting reflections, the great tears would *not* be kept back; the hysterical sobs would *not* subside; and, totally unable to combat with herself, Fanny gently laid baby in her cradle, and, kneeling down by the side of the bed,

gave way, the first time for many months, to a passionate burst of grief. Her whole married life passed in brief review before her—its sunny commencement; the clouds which had so long hung over them; the threatening aspect they now assumed, as though on the point of bursting in some terrible, unforeseen storm. What right had that man to come between her husband and her?—to alienate so entirely, as he had lately contrived to do, Tom's confidence from her? What could be the meaning of the secret interviews with rough, strange-looking men—of Clayton's mysterious comings and goings? of Tom's altered manner? There *must* be something wrong; ought she not to take Mr. Chesney into confidence, and warn him of that terrible influence? But then, again, would Tom ever forgive her for such a step? and, granted that she braved this consequence, would her interference be productive of any good? would the Rector listen to her?

From what Tom had told her of his uncle, as well as from his austere manner towards herself, Fanny shrank from appealing to him without proof more definite than mere suspicion.—What was she to do? which way should she turn?—As she sat thus in her despair, the voices below waxed louder and louder, and terror took a new form. She stole noiselessly out upon the stairs, and listened for a time; but all was once more still, and she returned to her room. Two o'clock struck! Would he never

come up?—and a second burst of tears came to her relief.

“Why are you tying, mamma? what’s a matter?” inquired a little voice from the other cot; and turning round with a start she perceived Dickie sitting up, rubbing his eyes in bewilderment at the unusual sight of mamma in tears.

“Nothing is the matter, Dickie,” she replied, hurriedly removing the tell-tale traces; “lie down again—there’s mamma’s darling! and go to sleep.”

Master Dick had no intention of going to sleep—he sat more upright than ever, and said, with an alarmingly wide-awake look, while he clenched his little fist with an instinctive consciousness of the cause of his mother’s distress, “I *hate* papa!”

“Oh fie, Dickie!” said Mrs. Hawkesworth’s shocked voice; “God will not love you, if you say such wicked things.”

“I don’t tare!” Dickie went on, defiantly; “we’d be so happy, if it wasn’t for him. I hate him—I *do*! and I hate Bully badder still! When I’m a man, I’ll till him, and ven you and I’ll doe right off, mamma, and never tome bat here any more.”

“Dickie is not mamma’s boy to-night,” said Fanny, too faint to be able to reason with the child.

“Yes, he is,” responded Dickie, demonstrating his claim to the title by clambering on the back of her chair, and nearly suffocating her in an affectionate hug, a noisy proceeding which, of course, was im-

mediately resented by Miss Baby as an infraction of her rights.

"Ah, Dickie, you have waked baby!"

"Baby's a toss, deedy, little fing!" soliloquized this miniature Tom, as he tucked himself underneath the warm blankets again; "she wants to teep you all to her-self! We shan't tate her wif us, when we doe away, shall we, mamma?"—The mother made no reply, and little Dick, after cogitating for some time over the resources of his wheelbarrow and spade in view of the proposed flight, turned on his side, and was soon lost in dreams of smothering the obnoxious Bully like the princes in the Tower. Overpowered by fatigue, Mrs. Hawkesworth at length fell into an uneasy slumber, to wake at intervals with a start of apprehension, and breathe a shuddering prayer for Tom.

Meanwhile, a very different scene was going on in the parlour underneath. Bully has not improved in appearance since we last saw him in the Chesney Arms. His lower jaw protrudes, and his eyes recede more than ever; his face is blotched and red, his expression more foxy, his slouch more sneaking, and his language more vulgar. Evidently, Mr. Clayton's recent companions have not been of a very refined order. Glancing from him to the erect, well-proportioned figure and aristocratic features opposite, we are at a loss to discover the attraction which each seems to find in the other, for two individuals more

apparently dissimilar were probably never thrown together. The bill, and how to meet it, was the subject under discussion. Captain Hawkesworth described his interview with the lawyer: "I can do no more, Bully," he concluded dejectedly; "I never was so floored in my life."

"You're in a precious muddle, Tom," rejoined his adviser, sagaciously; "there's no doubt about that."

"I am in a muddle!" retorted Tom angrily; "why don't you say *we*? You are as much in it as I; everything has been done in your name and at your suggestion."

"Softly, softly, Cap'n," said Bully, with a determined air, "business *is* business! I'm willing to help you as far as I possibly can *with safety*; but don't you go for to make any mistake. I take no risk; I never have done. I have dockyments at present in this here pocket that 'll prove I've acted all along as *your agent*. Nothing more!—merely as your agent. I'm not a principal in a single one o' them consarns."

"Clayton, you are a lying cheat!" cried the Captain, in an agony of mingled fury and apprehension; "how often have you declared to me that you went halves in every speculation? If there was anything to gain, you'd remember it fast enough. I've trusted everything to you," he went on piteously, "you know I have; and you always told me you had plenty of resources to fall back upon."

"And haven't I proved it?" said Bully, with an oath. "A hundred pound on Trotting Jenny last week, and fifty on Buceph'lus the week before!—whose pocket did that come out of, Cap'n?"

Captain Hawkesworth was silent for a moment: "Well, Bully," he said at length, with a forced laugh, "there is no occasion for us to quarrel—you know I don't understand financing, and if you *have* taken advantage of me, I suppose I must not grumble at it."

Bully took the pipe from his mouth and flung it on the floor with an expression stronger than the one he had used before: "Took advantage of you, have I Cap'n? d——n me, if ever I heard anythink to ekal that! Here have I been slavin' myself in your int'rests for months, berrin' myself in this here Fort, where I wouldn't so much as stay a single hour to please myself."

"I wish you had stayed in London," groaned the Captain; "you have brought me nothing but misery."

"I've kep' you out of a precious sight of misery," retorted Bully, who had picked up the pipe which he had broken for effect, and was smoking with the air of a martyr through the remaining fragment of a stem. "If you'd trusted any other man, don't you think the Rector 'd a known of your doin's long afore this? With the best will, they 'd a brought you into trouble. It isn't every one as can fi-nance

like me, Tom. Here I've been the means of bringin' you a good deal of tin, and a great deal of fun, and you wish I had stopped in London, do you? Well, if I'm to be credited with playin' the double part, I may as well get the enjoyment of it, and screw somethink out of the old boy by turnin' spy."

"You had better go over at once, then," returned Captain Hawkesworth, listlessly; "he will know all about it to-morrow without your interference."

"Come, Cap'n!" said Clayton suddenly, in an altered tone (it was no part of his plan to drive matters to extremity; he had left his victim to feel his own helplessness, and that was sufficient for his purpose). "Come, Tom! as you said before, don't let us quarrel! I'll never desert you as long as I have one sixpence to rub against another, but don't go for to aggravate me agin by hintin' that everythink's not above-board. It isn't handsome in you, Tom—it isn't indeed," and Bully's handkerchief was brought into requisition; "a feller has feelin's, though he mayn't be always a showin' of 'em."

Captain Hawkesworth's moody attitude did not change in the slightest degree after this touching appeal, and Bully tried other tactics: "I'll let you into a secret, Tom. I've not come *quite* to the end of my tether. I've provided for the bill long ago."

Captain Hawkesworth started: "The devil!" he exclaimed, "why did you not tell me so? Is it like

a true friend, Clayton, to let a fellow suffer the infernal torments I have gone through to-day, since Thompson's letter came?"

(The arrival at the last moment of the letter announcing Thompson's inability to procure the loan was a piece of the management by which Clayton kept his bear in order.) "Well, Tom, on my honour, I did it for the best. If you had known that I could fork out the needful, would you have exorted yourself to try old Tooke? He *might* have dubbed out, you know, and that would have been found money to us, and my little stock would have been ready for another emergency—don't you see? How could I tell that the old vagabond would show himself in such an aggravatin' way? He's helped you before, you know."

This argument was logical enough. "I don't know but the trying Tooke was a mistake. He may give my uncle the clue."

"Catch a weasel asleep! *He* turn informer against the next-heir-but-one to the estates! but it's a pity you let out what the money was wanted for."

"One gentleman is always ready to assist another in an affair of honour," said Tom sententiously (this was his favourite maxim, although, to tell the truth, he had always found its application somewhat one-sided, and his friends strangely forgetful of it when *he* got into difficulties). "Miserable old reptile as he is, I thought he could not withstand such an appeal."

Besides, who could suspect that *he* knew anything of the agreement? My uncle might surely have drawn out *that* without consulting him."

"Just like your uncle!" responded Bully, with a profound shake of the head; "anythink to keep you under his thumb! Depend upon it, half the people in Tredhill know of his great generosity."

Captain Hawkesworth sprang from his chair and paced the room fiercely, while Clayton eyed him askance from time to time, as if watching the effect of his words.

"Clayton!" burst forth Tom at length, with a stamp of the foot, "to get out of this miserable den—to free myself from this galling *espionage*, I'd sell my soul!" ("He's ripe for it!" *thought* Clayton, but he did not say a word.) "Well?" continued the Captain, passionately striking his fist upon the table till the glasses rang, "have you nothing to say? You seem to take a delight, Bully, in reminding me of my position, and then you sit like a stock or a stone. Have you no plan to propose? Is there no way of escape from this?"

"Yes," said Bully, deliberately pounding the sugar in his tumbler of grog, "there is a way out of it?"

Silence for a few moments. "An *honourable* way, Clayton?"

"Do you think I'd suggest a *dishonourable* way, Cap'n?" dryly. Another silence.

"Why the deuce didn't you speak of it before?"

" 'There's a time to speak and a time to be silent, Cap'n."

"For God's sake, Clayton, don't quote Scripture!" said Tom, with a look of horror at his companion.

"Very good!" rejoined Bully composedly, "then I'll quote somethink else: 'As a man's made his bed, so he may lie in it.' Devil a finger will I wag in your sarvice, if I'm to be told in perlite language that I'm first cousin to Old Nick;" and with a grunt expressive of disgust, Bully turned his inscrutable face away from the Captain, and to the fire, pretending to be absorbed in his pipe and his grog.

Tom resumed his agitated walk; presently he said in a choked voice: "Clayton! you promised just now that you would not desert me—act up to your word. Whatever good fortune befalls me, you shall share."

"I want no good fort'n. I am quite content."

"Bully!" said Tom, shaking him by the shoulders, "out with your plan! don't keep me on the rack."

Bully still smoked on inperturbably.

Tom drew his chair closer to the fire; stirred it meditatively for a few seconds: "Clayton," he said in a low voice, "is it connected with Robert?"

"Never mind *who* it's connected with," returned Bully, sulkily. "You don't worm no secrets out o' me."

"Then may the foul fiend take you—if you're not already his!" said the Captain, hastily starting up, and proceeding to light his candle.

Bully strolled to the door, locked it, put the key in his pocket, and said nonchalantly: "Sit down, Cap'n! don't onsettle yourself! *Now* I'll tell you my plan; it would have been no airthly use before. What's the good of suggestin' things to a man as falls asleep over his first tumbler of grog? Now that you're fairly alive, and up to the mark, we'll do a little business."

Captain Hawkesworth resumed his impatient walk, awaiting Bully's disclosure.

"When is your precious cousin—the heir—to seven thousand a year—expected home?" was that worthy's first remark, brought out amid successive judiciously interwoven puffs.

"He will be here nearly all the month of August and then he goes back to Germany until his twenty-first birthday."

Bully took a few more puffs: "What if we could persuade him to take Germany only *ongrout*, as the sayin' is?"

"The Captain held his breath: "What do you mean?"

"*Ongrout* to Australy, Cap'n! that's what I mean."

Captain Hawkesworth seemed rooted to the spot; great drops of perspiration stood on his forehead: "Bully!" he said, in a tone whose intensity prevented its rising above a whisper, "*you're a villain!*"

"Next time you tell me any similar news, Cap'n,

please not to hiss so! you've given me the earache," and Bully resumed his steadfast gaze into the fire.

Captain Hawkesworth dropped into his chair, rested his elbows on the table, and hid his face in his hands. For some time not a sound was audible.

Presently Clayton said, in tone and language very different from those he had hitherto used (it being one of his peculiarities that he could express himself in tolerable English, if he chose)—the bear was on the hot plate now—the Cap'n meant business! "You run no risk, Tom. Whether we help him or not, the young fool will be sure to decamp. If the bit is drawn the least inch tighter, Sir Robert will be off. He wants precious little instigation, from all I can make out."

"Clayton, you are a villain!" was all that Tom's scattered and bewildered brains could find to say.

"Now, look here, Cap'n! drop that!" said Bully threateningly. "I've stood enough of abuse to-night. No more of it, if *you* please. Who's this *villainy*, as you call it, going to benefit?" Another pause.

"If we could but get rid of him for a few years!" said Tom; "if we could but be sure of his coming back alive?"

"Leave that to me. I'll manage that," said Bully with a nod. "I'll entrust him to one of my pals out there; *he* 'll keep an eye on him, I'll warrant," and Bully chuckled. "A walking seven-thousand-a-year ain't easily lost sight of. I tell you, Cap'n, I see my

way to this business as clear as daylight, and so as to benefit all parties consarned. Let us look at it reason-ably. Sir Robert writes Miss Chesney, in a private and confidential letter, 'he hopes his uncle won't defer his majority, for if he does, he'll give 'em all the slip for three years, till he's completely out of the Rector's power.' Them's his pre-cise words." (Poor Alice little suspected in showing Robert's effusion to her cousin Tom, that his influence might be brought to bear upon her father,—for what a scheme she had laid the train!) "Of course, that means he'll emigrate to the new country, how else *could* he 'give 'em the slip?' You take this letter to the Rector, as in dooty bound, and point out to him the necessity of caution with the heir" (which, indeed, Tom had done). "The Rector is an obstinate old mule,—won't hear you, calls it 'boyish nonsense.' Well, what more responsibility rests with you? You've warned his guardian, you can do no more. De-pend upon it, *he will go, whether we help him or not.*"

"In that case, why not wait till we see how things are likely to turn out?"

"Why not wait till you find yourself took up?" retorted Bully, contemptuously. "I tell you, Cap'n, you can't afford to wait; you can't afford to leave anythink to chance. Besides, what is Sir Robert, that he should stand in your way? A slip of a boy, with no beard on his chin yet (pity the cons-crump-

tion didn't take him, instead of his sisters!) Whether is he or you likest seven thousand a year? Answer me that! A handsome feller like you, Cap'n—stands six foot one in his stockin's—come to your time of life, with a wife and family. *Him* to be enjoyin' himself like a lord, and *you* to be slavin' here for a few paltry shillin's. It's downright injustice!"

"No, no, Bully," replied Tom, modestly, "right *is* right, all the world over, and I am just as far from the Baronetcy as if there were twenty between me and it;" but, at the same time, he felt Bully's words to be only a just tribute to his merits, for the prolonged existence of his cousin Robert had been a constant source of surprise to him; and in fact, great part of his reckless conduct might be attributed to his secretly-cherished hope of one day seeing the young Baronet fall a victim to the disease that had carried off Sir Edward's elder children.

"Well, Tom," resumed Clayton, knocking the ashes out of his pipe (and the idiom from his language) preparatory to retiring, "you have the game in your own hands. You work upon the uncle as the returned prodigal; think it a bad thing for young men to have too early command of money; are sorry to observe that Robert is of an impulsive disposition; wish *your* majority had been postponed, and so forth. The other side we'll do together; never was such a paradise as Australia! Mr. Chesney applies the whip a *leetle* too hard; Sir Robert starts;

we hold the carrots to his rose, and, whew ! one fine morning my young sir is missing. *We* know his whereabouts, but we keep our thumb upon that, until you've had your revenge on the Rector by giving him a nice taste of anxiety. Then we bring him back, hale and hearty, all the better for seeing a little of life,"—and with a sagacious wink, Bully took his candle and went up to bed, leaving the Captain to digest his scheme at his leisure.

Long—long does he pace the little sitting-room ; now pausing in an agony of hesitation—now throwing himself into his chair with a muttered " God help me ! " Ay, Tom, could you but say that prayer with your heart, as well as with your lips, it would be your salvation !

He has no reluctance in plotting a little against his uncle ; he glories in being able to outwit him. But this deliberate wickedness against his orphan cousin, who has never injured him—Never injured him !—has he not ? Is not Robert the cause of all his present suffering ?

He springs to his feet again in the fierce attempt to banish the thoughts that force themselves upon him. In vain. On the one side he sees poverty, toil, painful humiliation ; on the other, wealth beyond what he has ever enjoyed, leisure, independence.

He sinks into his chair, burying his face in his hands, and starts again with affright.—What dreadful spectres are these looming in the background ?

Discovery—disgrace—dishonour! Oh! he cannot, he *cannot* endure this struggle. He *must* seize the chance thrown in his way by fate. He *must* enjoy the Baronetcy for a few years—only for a few years. Robert shall have it when he is twenty-four; or at the most, twenty-five. Surely, with a whole lifetime before him, he can easily spare Tom this little gratification!

The first grey streaks of light, forcing their way through the chinks in the shutters, reveal a determined, resolute man. Tom's mind is made up; all indecision has vanished. He distrusts Bully, but will follow his plan so far. Robert shall go abroad,—not to Australia, but to New Zealand—to a trusty friend of the Captain, who shall watch over him, and produce him at the appointed time.

Tom goes upstairs, but as he throws himself on his bed, he would give the world to be able to dismiss from his mind a certain sentence, "If anything happens to Sir Robert, I shall not forget the hints you have given me." "Impudent old scoundrel!"

CHAPTER XXI.

SOWING THE SEED.

ON a bright breezy morning in May, rather more than a year from the day on which our story opens, the Green, at Tredhill, exhibits an aspect unusually lively. At one end a crowd of curious idlers closely massed together, women dandling babies and holding them up above the surrounding heads to see what is going on; lounging fishermen and sailors, hands in pockets, pipe in mouth; inquisitive errand-boys with baskets full of non-delivered goods, occasionally pounced upon by irate housekeepers. At the other, by the cliffs, groups of spectators of a different stamp—some on foot, a few in vehicles of various kinds, one or two on horseback. Among the latter we observe our old friend the Rector, hale and vigorous as ever; he sits his powerful black horse remarkably well, and as he canters back and forward between the outer circle and the dark-blue line drawn up in martial array, is the cynosure of all eyes, while the involuntary comment rises to many lips: "What a pity Mr. Chesney had not entered the

Army, instead of the Church!" In a low basket-carriage, drawn by a pair of grey long-tailed ponies, with bright eyes and shaggy manes, sits Alice, reins in hand. Not the Alice we saw last year, downcast and dejected; this Alice is a roguish damsel, with a merry laugh that brings in its train a troop of bewitching dimples to play

"Hide and seek with the roses on her cheek,"

and turn the brains of two attendant squires, who—one on horseback, the other on foot—vie with each other in making the time pass pleasantly until the arrival of the hero of the day—the Staff-officer of name unknown, who is to put the dark-blue lines through sundry evolutions. The knight on the chestnut mare, stiff, portly, of unreckonable age, is none other than Sir Marmaduke Dale, in the uniform of a Major of the North-Coastshire Militia. The one on foot, a spare, black-coated gentleman, is none other than Edward Tooke—not the blushing, timid, tempest-tossed Edward whom we have hitherto known; but—O Love! what enchantress is like unto thee?—an Edward all life and spirit, his countenance sparkling with animation, his conversation with wit. It is only while with Alice that Edward has any respite from the exhausting inward struggle—to-night it will be renewed with redoubled force; but in broad daylight, in her presence, there is no place for any feeling beyond the consciousness that *she* is there, that he can watch the ever-varying

charm of her eyes, and listen to the silvery ring of her voice.

If we look across the mass of apple-blossoms pecked at by a humming-bird, which Alice affects to call a *hat*, we shall discover another reason for Edward's unwonted exhilaration.—What do we see by the side of the loved one? A fair, faded face, and a wasted form enveloped in shawls. What other inference than a transportingly delicious one can Edward draw from the fact of Alice's having driven over, at an early hour, for the express purpose of taking his mother to the Review? What motive, save *one*, could have prompted the pretty, loving ways with which she annihilated all Mrs. Tooke's objections, tied on with her own hands the long-unused bonnet, and triumphantly displayed the quantity of rugs and furs which she had provided "to cheat," as she said, "the east wind, for once"? Edward is in the seventh heaven; he and Alice keep up a constant fire of repartee, and amid their small shot poor Sir Marmaduke's old-fashioned volleys of artillery, in the shape of heavy compliments and ponderous jokes, have not the smallest chance of being heeded, and he rides off disconsolately to his legitimate sphere of action, where Colonel Whitehead, Captain Hawkesworth, two or three juniors, and of course, the Rector (whose war-like enthusiasm extends even to the Militia, and is positively catching), form a little knot apart, eagerly

At length they perceive from unmistakable indications that the Review is over. Alice says in alarm, "Oh, Mr. Edward! you must post me up in this affair; papa will expect me to know all about it!" Edward replies in consternation that he has not watched a single manœuvre, and then feels very much aggrieved when Alice declares that she must get Sir Marmaduke to "coach" her in the afternoon.

The Rector rides up, his fine features aglow with military ardour, to say, "Capital! capital! Did you ever see more precision or a better turn-out? Colonel Harris has just been complimenting the officers on their exertions—(of course Tom came in for the lion's share of the honours); says he'll report them quite equal to the Line!" and away he gallops to communicate the same gratifying intelligence to Mr. Screw, who draws himself up in bilious jealousy of his reverend brother's dashing appearance, and remarks to his wife that "it is quite time Chesney gave up all that folly; for *his* part, he thinks it a disgrace to the cloth!"

The gallant Colonel is at length marched off in triumph to enjoy the hospitality of the Mayor, preparatory to the afternoon inspection of the men at their guns. Edward recollects, with a sigh, a pressing engagement; Alice drives Mrs. Tooke back to the High Street; and Lady Charleswood goes on to the Terrace to have a little chat with Mrs. Hawkesworth (to whom she has taken a great fancy) before

after her health! If that isn't a sight worth looking at, he is a blind beetle!

Mr. Tooke may well be excused the thrill of gratified pride which mounts with such intoxicating force to his head, that he nearly misses his footing several times in his eagerness to lessen the distance between him and what seems to be the realization of his dearest wish.

When the Review is half over, another little pony carriage appears upon the scene, and pulls up close to Alice's. In it is Lady Charleswood, supremely beautiful, her delicate complexion tinged with a rosy glow from the exhilarating sea-air, her dark eyes radiant with pleasure as she watches her more-than-daughter, and thinks how very pretty Alice is growing. There is much shaking of hands (these Coastshire people are astonishingly out of the *mode*) and congratulating of the invalid upon her liberation from the two years' confinement to the house. Mrs. Tooke, as she sees, for the first time, Alice and her son together, is perfectly bewildered by a sudden spring of exulting happiness, by an overwhelming perception that her husband may not be mistaken after all; and as for the little lawyer, he brandishes his umbrella to such an extent, rubs his hands so unceasingly, and laughs so heartily at his own incomprehensible jokes, that everybody else laughs too, without the slightest idea of the cause of their merriment—so infectious is his hilarity.

succeeded in overcoming his pride so as to speak in the penitent but manly way he does of his mis-spent life, his wasted energies, and his humble yet firm resolutions for the future. Nor is this all! the Rector begins to have a vast respect for Tom as a "soldier to the backbone," and a man of the world; he has sent him the present of a superb hunter; and consults with deference his critical palate before ordering from his wine-merchant.

To this last and highest step in his uncle's esteem the Captain has mounted during the few weeks the Militia have been in Tredhill. True to his old, soldierly instincts, the Rector has evinced a special delight in the whole proceeding, "assisting" regularly twice or thrice a week at drill, to the Captain's unspeakable annoyance, until the happy thought suggested itself to him or his adviser, that Mr. Chesney's peculiarities might be profitably turned to the furthering of his own interest. In pursuance of this plan, Tom has professed himself highly gratified by his uncle's countenance, consulted him with the utmost gravity on all technical points, followed his advice (or pretended to do so), and above all, thrown himself into the arduous task of training the raw material with a zeal and ability which involuntarily extort Mr. Chesney's warmest approbation—he sees in Tom the counterpart of himself, and vows that "a great deal ought to be overlooked in so thorough a soldier."

The Captain is neither slow to perceive his opportunity, nor to take advantage of it. Among other little devices, he makes the most of the active service he has seen; the skirmishes with the Maories become in his version very important strategic engagements; he ransacks his own memory and Clayton's for details which shall impart *vraisemblance* to his narrative; describes every tree, bush, rivulet, village, dale, and hill on the scene of action, places his men so that the Rector may fight the battle over again in imagination vividly, and then, with consummate art, appeals to his judgment on the validity of the movements employed. These are sometimes approved, oftener condemned, by the umpire; in the latter case it is not without great show of opposition, and finally with great apparent frankness, that Tom consents to submit to the possibility of more legitimate tactics, concluding with, 'Pity you were not a soldier, uncle Stephen! you would have been a second Clyde.' In short, the Captain has succeeded in inspiring his uncle with the firm belief, that, in permitting him to retire from the service, the nation has suffered an irreparable loss, and has, besides, acted very shabbily in not presenting him with a handsome acknowledgment of his efforts on her behalf, and in this opinion the Rector is confirmed by the ingenuous hero's modest depreciation of his own exploits.

How is it possible that Mr. Chesney could be so easily "taken in"? you ask. You must bear in

mind, dear reader, that he had not the slightest reason for suspecting any underhand dealing on the part of his nephew: of the base scheme on foot, he of course knew nothing: from his standpoint, Tom had every inducement to act honourably, none to take a contrary course: and, in addition, he considered, that after his liberality towards him, he was fairly entitled to expect from his nephew the affection of a son.

The Rector had never overcome the early disappointment incident upon the change in his career; it had, to some extent, soured his nature, and although he had gradually come to regard it as a sacrifice to "filial duty;" still, there is no doubt that if he had his whole life to go over again, he would have preferred a thousand times Poverty and the army to Wealth and the church. All this, however, was irredeemably past and gone. But the great secret of Tom's influence over his uncle (an influence as despotic as that exercised over the Captain by Bully) is to be looked for in the fact of his having adopted the profession beloved by the Rector. It was very gratifying to find the boy whom he had partly trained, and whom he purposed treating in all respects as his own son, so congenially-minded!

And what does Alice think of the sudden change in cousin Tom? Too true herself to imagine deceit in others, she rejoices at it, not only on her father's

account, but also on her own; for so long as the Rector is pleasantly occupied with Captain Hawkesworth, Alice may breathe more freely with regard to Sir Marmaduke. She has reason to fear that not only have the Baronet's attentions a certain aim, but that this aim is favoured by Mr. Chesney; and although she knows that her father is too just to force her into an engagement against her will, she yet shrinks from coming into direct collision with him, and is well pleased that the excitement of Tom's military experiences, past and present, should lead him to forget her for a while; trusting, in the meantime, to Sir Marmaduke's growing tired of the cold way in which his overtures are received.

Besides, it is a great relief to Alice to have some one to whom she can show *all* Robert's productions without reserve; some one who thinks, with her, that if undue severity be exercised towards him, the young heir will take some desperate step; some one who will exert his influence to bring the Rector to leniency and caution; and the part of confidant, of course, Tom acts to perfection, being thus enabled to obtain a greater insight into Robert's peculiarities with a view to future operations. And it is rather a curious coincidence, that Tom's rise in his uncle's esteem is in exact proportion to Robert's fall.

"Tom," says the Rector, as they walk along together, "do you recollect that letter of Robert's I showed you some time ago—an account of his join-

ing those mad duellists, and getting into trouble through it?"

"Certainly, it was a most laughable production."

"I am sorry to tell you that Frank's letter of this morning gives a very different version of the affair. It turns out to have been so serious that the Government had to interfere—to strengthen the hands of the College authorities; and, from what Frank says, Robert must have been one of the ringleaders." We will not pause to inquire into the Doctor's motive for misrepresenting the young man's conduct; possibly, he had some idea of thereby laying greater stress on his personal exertions for the Baronet's release. "I do not complain of that," pursues the Rector, anxiously, "young men *will* be young men; but why should Robert have sent us a story so glossed over? I can excuse anything but a want of candour. Then, again, in a letter Alice had to-day from him, he says that he does not wish to spend the autumn vacation at home. What can be the meaning of that?"

"It does not *look* well," replies Tom, with an emphatic shake of the head; "does he not give any reason for such extraordinary conduct?"

"None, except that 'as his twenty-first birthday occurs in February next, he does not see the use of returning to England so shortly before.' Five months is not so *very* short a time. I must say, I feel rather hurt at this evident desire to shun Ilmington. He preferred remaining in Germany last year too."

"It certainly looks very queer," repeats Tom. "If I were you, uncle, I should insist upon his showing face in August. Depend upon it, there's a secret reason for all this. He has got entangled in some way, and fears that if he came here he might let out too much."

"*Entangled*, Tom! what on earth do you mean?" exclaims Mr. Chesney, astounded. (His fears had never gone beyond a suspicion that Robert has no great affection for himself personally, and is eager to assert his independence, as we know, the real head and front of the Baronet's offences). "You don't suspect that he has got into some scrape he dare not mention?"

"Well," says the Captain, with the air of one compelled against his will to bear testimony detrimental to another, "I don't want to alarm you unnecessarily, uncle Stephen. I *may* be mistaken, but so far as my knowledge of the world goes, there is something wrong in all this. Young men, especially young men coming into a fortune, are not usually averse to return home, unless they have something to conceal from those at home. I certainly cannot cast the first stone; I have not always kept in the straight path myself, but if my dear-bought experience serve to prevent Robert's stumbling, I shall not have suffered in vain."

"Well, well!" says Mr. Chesney, impatiently, "and what do you think is at the bottom of this?"

"How did he spend his last vacation?" continues Tom, with the same reluctant manner, "in an out-of-the-world Würtemberg hamlet—with people of, to say the least, no position whatever."

"Frank knows all about them," says the Rector, hesitatingly.

"Who's Frank?" retorts Tom, contemptuously, forgetful that a moment before he has accepted Frank's testimony without a doubt; "what does *he* know about proper associates for a young fellow like Robert? The people may be well enough, but what enjoyment could he possibly find with them? Is it not natural that he should prefer, *under ordinary circumstances*, to be here, where he has every luxury, and plenty of his equals to caress and flatter him to his heart's content?—and yet he deliberately stays away. Depend upon it, uncle Stephen, there is some screw loose, (in a low tone) some *girl* in the business."

Mr. Chesney starts and recoils—a fresh train of horrible ideas suggests itself. "Oh, Tom! Tom! why did you not hint your suspicions to me before?" he cries in real agony; "I would not have allowed Robert to remain a day in Städtlein if I had thought of such a contingency."

"You had better shut Robert up in a glass case," says Tom, coolly; "wherever he goes he will find plenty of traps laid for the fortunate possessor of seven thousand a year. If he has not the sense to

steer clear of them, it is his own misfortune. Mind you, uncle, I do not mean to imply that this entanglement is of a disgraceful nature; he may simply have fallen in love with one of Müller's sisters, at this delightful rural retreat. I only say that I do *not* like his refusal to come home."

"Should I not write for him to return at once?" says the Rector, who, in the light of Tom's superior knowledge of young men and the world of young men, begins to fancy that he has been very remiss in his duties as a guardian.

"I do not see what object would be gained by that," replies Tom, reflectively; "the mischief, whatever it is, has been done already. Robert must have a great deal more *cunning* in his composition than we give him credit for," he continues with a laugh; "from his letters you would believe him inspired with a *grande passion* for Alice. Fancy him writing in that strain, while making love to another flame in Germany!"

It certainly requires a very considerable stretch of imagination to fancy any such hypothesis; every line of Robert's letters betrays his secret boyish affection for his cousin, in a way that could never have been the result of *intention*. But this fresh arrow finds its way home, and Mr. Chesney returns from the conference with his nephew, fully convinced that Robert is not only involved in some guilty *liaison*, but that he seeks to blind his English

friends to it, by making Alice his dupe. The Captain has reason to be satisfied with his morning's work.

Luncheon is nearly over at the Terrace, and, Captain Hawkesworth begins to recover his gaiety which had flagged somewhat since they entered the house. There is little chance now of Bully's gracing the festal board by his presence, as he threatened to do in the morning. Hitherto, Tom has been able to persuade him into remaining behind the scenes, and discreetly providing himself with an engagement out of town whenever the Rector is expected at Tredhill. But now, unfortunately, he is beginning to grumble at this endeavour to keep him in the background, and asserts that the success of their scheme mainly depends upon his learning to know Mr. Chesney in the flesh, and not merely by Tom's report. Consequently, with the dismal certainty that Mr. Clayton will be as good as his word, the Captain has been on thorns. At a quarter-past three the gun-drill begins; it only wants twenty minutes to that time now; surely Bully will have the good sense to stay away a little longer! Vain hope. Mr. Clayton has only mistaken the hour. As the clock strikes three—to Tom's embarrassed horror—he enters, radiant in garments of a very "*loud*" sort indeed, and evidently on amicable terms with himself and the world in general, if we may judge from the mellow grin which beautifies his features, speedily changing into one of dismay as he surveys the table.

"What, Tom!" he says, "done lunch already?"

Everybody looks up in utter amazement; Mrs. Hawkesworth turns red and white by turns. The Rector stares in well-bred amazement at the new-comer, as at some strange animal—species unknown.

The Captain begins: "An old bush-friend, uncle," when he is relieved from further embarrassment by a scream from Alice. Lady Charleswood has fallen senseless from her chair, and in the confusion that ensues, Mr. Clayton quietly retires, followed as quickly by the Rector, who takes the liberty of turning the key upon him, and sending for a constable.

Lady Charleswood recovers, glances round with a shuddering: "Don't leave me, Alice! I have seen him—that dreadful man!" and relapses again. Mr. Chesney orders her carriage without delay, and when she is able to be moved, bids Alice accompany her to The Cedars, and remain with her till he joins them. Tom begins to bluster and take exception to his uncle's proceedings. Mr. Chesney pays no heed to him; unlocks the place of Clayton's confinement, and, in his capacity as Justice of the Peace, charges that gentleman with being one Jabez Hill, formerly residing in Wales, and concerned in a certain murder.

Who can describe the secret tortures Captain Hawkesworth endures all this time. He knows nothing of Bully's history, previous to the Dunedin episode; and if he should be guilty of this deed, all

is lost, for Clayton is malicious enough to betray everything.

To his intense relief, Bully is Injured Innocence personified; answers all questions in a clear straightforward manner; gives a succinct, intelligible account of his whole career; offers to refer to well-known bankers and merchants; and in short, completely staggers the Rector, who (concluding that it is a case of "mistaken identity," and that Lucy's misfortunes have turned her brain), releases him, with apologies for the wrongful detention he has suffered, and privately warns his nephew to beware of that "hang-dog-looking fellow. If he is not a villain, Tom, a more unfortunate man does not breathe. The mark of Cain is stamped upon his brow."

Tom assures his uncle that he is a "rough diamond," but that in accordance with his advice, he will try to get rid of him, adding: "I cannot behave shabbily to him, you know, uncle, after the service he once rendered me" (Bully had saved Tom from being lost in the bush, which had been the commencement of their intercourse), and so the matter drops.

But Clayton's curiosity regarding Mr. Chesney is at an end; it has given place to resentment.

Book the Fifth.

CHAPTER XXII.

MALA'S FETE.

SINCE the eventful evening of the concert in aid of the famine-fund, Arnold's prospects have been steadily brightening. The maturer judgment of the critics has confirmed that of the general public, and he is recognised as a composer of whom the Fatherland may yet be proud. Not the most backward to rejoice in his success is Wallraf; he seems, in fact, to claim a sort of right in him, as he does in Mala, and speaks of him everywhere as "*our* Arnold." Arnold begins to think that the day is not far distant when he may speak to Herr Bergmann of his love for Mala, especially as he knows that there is every probability of his soon being in possession of a good income, independently of his works; for Wallraf expects to receive an early summons to undertake the direction of the Imperial Concerts at St. Petersburg; and Arnold hopes, through his interest and the Director's, to be appointed his successor at the Conservatorium.

The concert has not been without fruits of another

kind. It has partly dispelled the lingering doubt regarding Lucien, which has tormented him ever since his introduction to the Director's house. M. Descroix has not visited Städtlein during the period that has elapsed; and although Arnold is aware of his having joined his uncle in Switzerland last autumn, he is not without hopes that in the intervening twelve months Mala's unmistakable partiality for her cousin may have cooled. He knows better than any one else what it must have cost Mala, before she conquered her timidity sufficiently to come to the rescue of his cantata. Would she have made the effort simply for a *brother*? Arnold thinks not, and draws his own inference accordingly. At times, it must be confessed, he is not quite sure of Mala's manner; would she be so frank and unreserved towards him, if she regarded him from any other than a sisterly point? Arnold is not much versed in love affairs, but he has an instinctive presentiment that Mala's affection for him, strong though it is, differs essentially from that which he feels towards her. What is wanting, he cannot tell; but he wishes impatiently that he could hasten the deliberations of the Russian authorities, and acquire the right to solve his doubts. Until then, Arnold will suffer agonies of suspense rather than betray his intentions.

September had come—hot and sultry. The University and the Conservatorium were deserted.

Robert had gone, much against his will, to England ; but Arnold was not able to spend the vacation at home, greatly to his mother's chagrin. During the academic year, the Director had not had leisure to fulfil an engagement entered into with a choral society in a distant town, to furnish a new work by a certain date, and rather than fail in his promise he relinquished his usual Swiss tour, and devoted himself to the completion of the work. Arnold felt it incumbent on him to give what assistance he could towards getting it rapidly through the press, and consequently remained in Städtlein ; but before the final proof-sheet had undergone revision, the last week of the vacation was at hand, and with it an annual family festival.

Herr Bergmann, like most of the well-to-do citizens of Städtlein, owned a small plot of terraced ground on a hill about ten miles from the town, which he fondly designated "my Vineyard." In reality, it afforded sufficient wine for private consumption, and was the Director's sole relaxation. Many times during the busy year he stole an hour or two to examine the progress of the beloved plants, superintend the gardener left in charge, and ascertain for himself that neither frost nor insects were conspiring against him ; and every autumn, after the magnate of the district had officially declared the *Weinlese* begun, it was his custom to assemble some twenty or thirty of his most intimate acquaintances

to assist in the harvest. This event, known as *Mala's fête*, on account of its usually happening immediately before her birthday, was looked forward to with eagerness by all who had ever had the pleasure of being invited to it. Many people had vineyards, and gave fêtes, but few had the art of concentrating so much happiness into them as Herr Bergmann. After the party, the Director and Arnold were to set off for F——, to superintend the production of the new work, while Mala and her aunt remained in Bächlein for a week.

The eventful day dawned as such a day ought to dawn, but very rarely does—the heat agreeably tempered by a cool breeze, not a cloud to be seen on the blue sky; and as Arnold put his foot on the step of the carriage which was to convey them to the rendezvous,—it seemed to him the entrance into Elysium, for would he not have opposite to him during a ten-mile drive the sweetest face in the world, sparkling with the prospect of expected pleasure, and also—must we confess it?—with the innocent and delightful consciousness that under the shade of its piquant little shepherdess-hat, it looked irresistibly charming.

Aunt Martha caught the infection of the bright young spirits by her side, and began several long-winded narratives of similar festivals of her youth, where, according to her own account, she had been the admired of all admirers; but we are sorry to say

that one by one her reminiscences came to an untimely end, as she perceived that Mala and Arnold were too absorbed in themselves to listen, while even the Director had inconsiderately shut his eyes, and pretended to be asleep.

Apart from the circumstance which to Arnold cast a rosy hue over the morning, the drive itself was very pleasant,—the road winding now among the hills, whence every few minutes a picturesque glimpse of the river was to be obtained; now diving into the shades of moss-grown orchards, where the boughs on either side, bending under their treasure of bloom-weighted plums, tempted to forgetfulness of the town-bred distinction of Meum and Tuum. And when the coachman, a crusty carle, insisted on half the party alighting to ease a particularly steep ascent for his old horse, that only added zest to the enjoyment, and gave Arnold an opportunity of being alone with Mala.

How the two gradually fell behind, and allowed the chaise to get far in advance; how Mala slung her hat over her arm Chinese-fashion, and Arnold protected her with an umbrella; how they wandered from the carriage-road, and found themselves in some inexplicable way sitting together by the side of a deserted stone quarry, forgetful of the fête, and of all else—once more children—Mala weaving a novel wreath of the scarlet berries of the mountain-ash for her hat, while Arnold irretrievably ruined

his by filling it with brambles and bilberries; how much sweet nonsense he found to say, pouring forth compliments with a fluency that surprised himself; and how bewitchingly she smiled, and blushed, wondering all the time in her secret heart if Lucien could talk as nicely, or if in his frequent visits to that gay, deceiving Paris, he had learned to forget his little German cousin; how, at length, they made their appearance at the top of the hill an hour after the others; how innocently they discovered, all of a sudden, that the heat had been intolerable; how Mala pacified the Director's wrath by smothering him in garlands until he looked like an old satyr; how Arnold mollified the impatience of Jehu by unlimited *Trink-geld*;—to relate all this in full would necessitate a chapter to itself, and we prefer to leave it to the imagination of our readers. Suffice it, that to Arnold, at least, the Golden Age seemed for a few hours to have revisited earth.—Ah, Mala! Mala! how could you be such a deceitful little puss?

The delay on the road to which we have referred made it considerably beyond the appointed time when they arrived at their destination, and the number of tilted carriages and picketed horses (giving to the little wood above the Weinberg the appearance of an encampment of aristocratic gipsies), suggested that not a few of the guests had preceded the host—a supposition that was proved by an occasional glimpse of bright dresses fluttering among the dark

stems, in emulation of the sunbeams which lit up the glade with a flickering light.

As they drive up, Arnold's quick eyes perceive something which, with the rapid alchemy of jealousy, turns the Golden Age into an Iron one—Lieutenant Rheineck standing by the roadside with a superb bouquet in his hand, evidently for presentation to the Queen of the fête.—Addle-pated puppy!—what business has he there? smuggling himself in, *en civile*, lest his uniform should betray him as a non-invited guest! And Mala!—*Donnerwetter*!—instead of drawing herself up like a tragedy-princess, and demanding the meaning of his presence on her father's soil—Mala actually laughs and nods to him, and looks delighted with the flowers!—What shallow things girls are, to be sure! Wallraf is quite right, after all!

Arnold's gloomy reflections are cut short by the Director, who, declaring that he will have no drones in his hive, sets everybody to work in his vineyard—with the single stipulation that more is to be cut than eaten. Arnold smothers his indignation at seeing Mala led by the Lieutenant to the farthest, snuggest corner, and submits to pair off with Anna Teck, the droll girl with the bright eyes and snub nose—whom he conducts as near as possible to the chosen retreat, and to whom he repeats a number of loftily-grand maxims concerning Truth and Perjury in an unnecessarily loud voice, which frightens Anna

out of her poor little wits, and causes infinite amusement to the insolent son of Mars behind the trellis-work. The latter, however, does not very long enjoy his good fortune, for before he has been many minutes master of the field, there comes an urgent message from the good-natured widow with whom he lodges, bidding him lose not an instant in returning to Städtlein, as his regiment has received sudden marching orders, and the colonel is sending scouts out all over the town in search of his junior officers, not one of whom is to be found.—Duty *versus* Love!—The Herr Lieutenant sees a prospect of preferment and promotion (he knows very well that there will be some difficulty in looking up his colleagues), so he kisses Mala's hand, his own to Arnold, pays his respects to the Director, and beats a hasty retreat. Arnold luckily catches sight of young Stein wandering about disconsolately—he has come too late to secure a partner. In a twinkling he is made happy by sharing the labours of his Anna, his adorable Anna! to whose charms an elaborately-carved *A. T.* on every bench in the Public Gardens abundantly testifies; and Arnold begins to think that Lieutenant Rheineck is a very sensible fellow, and has chosen a delightful little nook.

What scene in after-life ever presented itself to Arnold with the freshness, the zest, of this memorable *Weinlese*! The intensely blue sky overhead; the breeze, suggestive of cool streams and waving trees,

the interest of the occupation, in which more senses than one were regaled ; the view from the highest terrace—the river, with its background of rock and mountain ; the entire hill and the valley beneath dotted over with busy, eager workers—the women in tight-fitting jackets, short petticoats, and high white caps, each armed with a pair of shears, whose every snip was succeeded by the fall of a purple cluster, hitherto concealed behind its mass of leaves, into the immense basket placed ready to receive it ; the men with panniers on their heads, descending the winding paths to the spot where the truck waited to convey the precious spoil to the vats ; the genial happiness that prevailed ; the jokes at the expense of the unlucky wights who persisted in slipping every now and again, scattering their burden far and near ; the merry snatches of song borne upwards on the wind !

One o'clock comes, and aunt Martha gives sundry signals, meant to be intelligible only to a favoured few, to lend their aid in the preparation of the feast. But a couple of hours' work in the open air preceded by a long drive, has sharpened the wits and the appetites of more than the elect, and the good lady is besieged with offers of assistance which she has not the fortitude to decline, and in a few minutes the wood is alive with amateur waiters—compounding salads, breaking glasses, upsetting mustard, spilling cream, drawing the champagne before it is wanted, and tumbling over one another generally, as if to

demonstrate the truth of the adage concerning too many cooks. The mirth reaches its height when aunt Martha pronounces everything perfect. The few remaining assiduous workers are summoned by means of a bugle which suddenly presents itself, and as no owner can be found to claim it, is supposed to be the property of the regiment, stolen for the day by Lieutenant Rheineck, and forgotten in his precipitate flight.

The picnic proceeds with a great deal of merriment—the mistakes being neither more nor less, and the puns neither better nor worse, than those perpetrated in England on similar occasions. When it is half over, an irresistible burst of laughter greets the appearance of young Stein and Anna Teck, who declare, somewhat sheepishly, that they did not hear the warning-call, and are, consequently, unmercifully twitted for the remainder of the day. We regret to be obliged to state, that although the plan of dispensing with servants originated with Mala and her young friends (who had willingly taken upon themselves the *prospective* trouble of the repast), no sooner has the *Most* been tasted, than they all, without exception, mysteriously vanish, dispersing themselves through the green-wood in threes and fours, (and, perhaps twos), regardless of the fact that plate and crystal cannot reasonably be expected to walk back of their own accord into the respective hampers; and the laughing voices of the truants sound in the ears of aunt

Martha and the few irate dowagers thus uncere-
moniously forsaken, like the notes of the mocking-
bird, for it is equally difficult to discover whence
they proceed.

Alas! that so merry a comedy should end, ere
long, in tragedy!

About four o'clock the terrace and the wood began
to be deserted—most of the guests had gone down to
the village inn, where the day was to be finished by
a dance. Arnold and Mala still remained, however;
for to them aunt Martha had entrusted the cutting
of a particular sort of white grape, specially intended
for her brother's after-dinner delectation, and the
vines were not quite stripped. They cut for some
time in silence. After the noisy merriment of the
day, the short respite of quiet was a boon. At
length Arnold said: "There! done at last! Now
I shall help you, Mala." Receiving no response, he
looked round—no Mala was in sight. Where could
she have gone? Surely not to the village without
him? On the little path leading up to the wood, he
perceived her in the attitude of one listening—
listening intently, for some expected sound, and at
the same instant a crackling as of dried leaves
pressed by a hasty foot struck upon his ear—Mala
sprang forward with a sudden cry, and was clasped
in the arms of a stranger.

A *stranger!* one look at the two was enough.
An unutterable sense of desolation stole over Arnold

—the sky lost its brightness—the earth reeled beneath his feet. Mechanically he staggered back to the white vine, unheeded by the lovers; and sheltered by the overhanging leaves, knelt down as if to cut—in reality, to gain a moment's time. That cry! that sparkling, upturned face! What a secret had these revealed! Mala—Mala could never be his! What need of words to tell that which his eyes had seen? Fool—madman that he had been, so to deceive himself!

How long he remained thus, stunned and motionless, he never knew; it might have been seconds—it might have been hours. The first thing that roused him to consciousness was his own name pronounced gaily, eagerly, in Mala's voice. He rose hurriedly—the long shadows lay across the path—two others were approaching; by a great effort he recovered his self-control, and advanced to meet them. Mala and Lucien stood before him. In her impetuous way, she seized his hand: "Come, Arnold! let me present you to Lucien—my cousin Lucien! Is it not delightful that he should have arrived just at the right time—on my fête? Lucien!—our Arnold! you know him, I am sure, already."

The rivals looked at each other, and bowed silently—each felt instinctively that friendship could not exist between them. But in that first glance Arnold read something more. As he encountered the half-sneering, half-triumphant expression of Lucien's eye,

and the cruel curve of the refined nostril, the life-forces came bounding back to his heart—misery gave place to indignation. The rays of the setting sun fell full upon his face, disclosing only too plainly the mental conflict.

"My God!" cried Mala, falling back in horror, "Arnold, are you ill?"

The insolent eyes were still upon him; pride came to his aid, and Arnold forced himself to murmur a few words about the heat, but his voice sounded hoarse and unnatural. Mala looked wistfully at him, but she said nothing; and they began the descent to the village.

When the Director and Arnold returned home that night, the first object that met their eye on entering the dining-room was the Alte. Surprised at this, for the old man's usual hour of retiring was long past, Herr Bergmann was about to speak when the Alte said in a low, significant tone,—

"Gottlob, Lucien is here!"

"I know it," returned the Director, "I left him at the Weinberg."

"Left him at the Weinberg! left him with Mala!" repeated the Alte, his face twitching convulsively.

"Yes; why not, Alte?"

"Now may God forgive thee!" said the old man; and without another word he took up his candle and disappeared.

The long, gloomy room, half lit by an oil lamp burning dimly on a side-table; the bent, withered form of the Alte—his eager, nervous glance; his warning, almost menacing gestures, might have served as a subject for Rembrandt.

"There is no love lost between the Alte and Lucien," said the Director, with an attempt at cheerfulness; "he cannot suffer him to be near our pet—but he really carries it too far."

Alas, poor Arnold! he spent the night in pacing his room, recalling to mind again and again the scene so indelibly impressed upon his memory—now cursing his own blindness and folly for having so long hugged the belief that Mala returned his love—again trying to persuade himself that there might still be hope for him. Towards morning he flung himself on his bed and slept for an hour—but who shall describe his waking? The dull consciousness of something unusual, the flash of recollection, the bitter realization of his loss, with its accompanying sense of utter prostration,—Arnold was as one rudely shaken out of a delicious dream, compelled to buffet with reality, while the entrancing harmonies of the spirit-world still ring in his ears.

Unable longer to endure his misery, he rose and went down-stairs. It was still early, no one was astir, and his footstep echoed through the solitary rooms with a dreary sound. He entered the drawing-room: there, but a few hours before, he had

knelt by her side, holding the skein of wool while she wound it into a ball; the Director had looked up from his paper, and said, with a smile to see them so occupied,—

“Scene from ‘Egmont’!”

“Yes indeed,” thought Arnold, with a pang; “the play is going on, and I am cast overboard like poor Brackenburg.”

He wandered out into the garden, but this proved even worse—there were her flower-beds, the arbour where he had first seen her, the half-finished rockery they had been making together—the associations were too overpowering, and Arnold returned to the house, locked himself into his own room, and gave way to a fit of despair.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE THUNDERSTORM.

THE visit to F—— was the best thing that could have befallen Arnold under the circumstances; the change of scene helped to divert his thoughts from himself, and by the time they returned to Städtlein, he was prepared to face the worst, to await calmly the result of Lucien's visit to the Weinberg. In his present mood, however, he could not trust himself to meet M. Descroix, and therefore absented himself the whole of the day on which Mala was expected home, trusting that his rival would leave town before the evening.

Accidentally meeting Frau Frank in the street, he learned that Robert had arrived from England, and went, in the afternoon, to the Doctor's house. Proceeding at once, as his custom was, to the young baronet's rooms, he found his efforts to open the door resisted by some impediment inside.

"Marsden, you fool! clear away those fowling-pieces," called out Robert's voice from within.

And, after a little delay, Arnold succeeded in effecting an entrance, only to pause in a fresh

dilemma, for the floor was littered from end to end by an indescribable mass of confusion—garments of all descriptions, books, foils, boxing-gloves, fishing-tackle, and a variety of fire-arms—in the midst of which sat the proprietor, perched on a solitary chair.

“All right, old fellow, go ahead, you’ll do no damage,” he said, with a laugh at Arnold’s dismay; “what good genius prompted you to come here so soon?” he continued, with a hearty shake of the hand. “I was just going round to you, as soon as I had devised some plan for secreting these guns; Frau Frank would go off in hysterics if she caught sight of them.”

“What on earth do you mean to do with such a number?” returned Arnold, astonished; “you have enough there to stock a small store.”

“Well, you see, if this French invasion that you are always dreading ever does take place, you and I will be prepared at least. Holloa! Marsden, look where you are stepping, you have done for that rod. Bundle the whole lot away as quickly as you can. I must see them safe before I go out. What do you say to a pull up the river, Arnold?”

“I have no objection; I have not been on the water since you left, and this is my last day out of harness.”

“What do you call *in* harness, pray?” returned Robert, pausing, with a gun in each hand, to scruti-

nize his friend's appearance. "I believe you have been slaving all vacation; you look as seedy as—as I do, and that is saying a good deal."

"I have been working rather hard," said Arnold, quietly, and the ammunition having been disposed of to Robert's satisfaction, they sallied forth in the direction of the river.

It was a sultry, depressing day, with not a breath of wind stirring, and the weather seemed to affect Robert, for he became very silent, and his usual gay manner was replaced by a cloud of moody dissatisfaction.

Arnold noticed this, and began to fear that the English visit had not been productive of much good, but he waited for Robert to introduce the subject, and they proceeded for some time without speaking, Robert rowing, as usual, and Arnold at the helm. Presently the former said, abruptly, "I have had a split with my uncle, Arnold."

"A quarrel, Robert?"

"Well, yes, I suppose it is a quarrel, although we parted apparently friends.—I will never darken his door again."

Arnold paused for a moment in consternation, and regret that what he had so long striven to prevent had actually taken place. "What was it about?" he said, at length.

"First of all, he chose to allege that I had written a false account of the affair with the Mayor. You

saw the letter, Arnold, and can judge for yourself whether it was true or false."

"But what could possibly induce him to doubt it?"

"Frank wrote him a parcel of lies."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Arnold, indignantly, "but you have no need to rest under such an imputation; your uncle has only to write to the Rector here, or the Mayor, in order to satisfy himself. Did you not suggest that to him?"

"No," said Robert, shortly, "I could not stoop to suggest what ought to have occurred to himself at once, if he was not prejudiced against me. If he chooses to accept Frank's word in preference to mine, he is quite welcome to do so; and not only that," Robert went on with increasing irritation, "he even hinted that I had some secret reason for remaining here last autumn; that I was *afraid* to face him. I told him pretty plainly that I feared neither him nor any other man; that I had nothing to conceal.—Unfortunately," Robert added, after a little, "I was obliged to ask him for money, about four hundred pounds extra; and as I did not see the fun of telling him what it was for, he chose to put his own construction on my silence, and wound up by refusing to let me have it."

"There I think you were wrong," said Arnold; "four hundred pounds is a large sum; it seems to me that as your guardian he would not have been

justified in giving it to you without knowing how it was to be spent."

"Nonsense, Arnold! what are you talking about? if I had asked him for a thousand pounds he could not have made a greater fuss. Tom says (you know my cousin, Tom Hawkesworth) he says—that it is perfectly scandalous to expect a fellow of my age to account for every penny beyond that trumpery allowance, and he thinks that I have been wonderfully moderate. If my uncle does not like to believe that I want the cash for *bond fide* purposes, he may do t'other thing, for devil a bit of an explanation will he ever get from me."

Arnold listened in some astonishment to this speech, in which he hardly recognised the Robert of a few weeks before—he seemed so mysteriously *hardened*. True, he had been apt enough formerly to indulge in pasquinades against his uncle, but never before had they assumed the fiercely bitter tone of his present remarks. "Dear Robert," he said, gently, "is it worth while to listen to what your cousin or any one else says? You might have yielded to your uncle for the last time; February will soon be here, you know."

"The fact is, Arnold," said Robert, relenting a little, "I could not have told my uncle what I wanted the money for. I got into a scrape long before I knew you, when I was only a boy of eighteen, the first winter I was here by myself.—Just imagine the

effect of this upon his clerical brains ;” and he produced from his pocket-book a piece of dirty pink paper, which he handed to Arnold, saying, “I don’t mind you seeing it. I always carry it about with me as a memento of my folly.” It was a letter badly written and spelt :—

“My dear *Herz*,

“Just a line to say—don’t come to-night. That stupid young *Taugenichts* of an English lord, Sir R. C., is to see me home.—Dost wish me joy ?—The thick-headedness—the *gaucherie* of these Britishers is past belief ; the only point to be admired about them is the size of their prodigious pockets, and into Sir R. C.’s I have already had my hand pretty far. But it is for thee and for me, *nicht wahr* ? So don’t be disappointed.

“Thy Célestine.”

“Well ?” said Robert, impatiently, as Arnold gravely folded the paper and gave it back to him.

“You have been bit ?”

“Exactly ! that note is from a *Teufelchen* of a ballet-dancer to whom I used to pay attention.—How I used to worship that creature ! To me she was innocence—purity itself. I’d as soon have thought of imputing wrong motives to my own sister (had I been so lucky as to have one) as to her.”

“And meantime she was using you as a tool ?”

“Precisely ! all this debt that has hung like a

millstone round my neck for years was gone into to supply my lady with jewellery, and dress, and little et-ceteras.—By the way, how fond she used to be of *bonbons*! That might have opened my eyes; girls who are perpetually crunching sweetmeats are not worth much."

"And how did you get hold of this production? It is clearly not meant for your perusal."

"That was a piece of luck, wasn't it?" said Robert, pausing in his rowing; "if it had not been for that, I might have been in her clutches to this day. You see she had evidently written in a hurry, and put the notes into the wrong covers; the one intended for me, all honey and sweet words, doubtless went to her dear *Herz*, whoever he may be, and I hope thoroughly disgusted him also.—Well, do you still think I ought to have shown all this to my reverend uncle?"

Arnold was silent, and Robert continued, vehemently, "Do you not see, that it would only have confirmed his worst suspicions as to my not going home last year? Do you imagine he would have believed me, when I produced a bill for trinkets to the tune of two hundred pounds, and declared that I presented them to the lady merely as tokens of admiration—as I should have given them to my cousin Alice, for instance? Mind you, I acknowledge that I was a fool, and acted like one in the whole affair. But I was not a *knave*, and that is

my real reason for refusing to tell my uncle. If he were like some men whom I have met, who would have said, 'Well, Robert, you have been an ass, but you have bought experience cheaply,' it would be another thing. But I would have been credited with a great deal more than I have ever done, and looked upon as a reprobate and a black sheep for the rest of my life."

"Robert," said Arnold earnestly, "take my advice for once. I may not have seen so much of the world as your cousin Tom, but I am certain it will be best in the end to confide in your uncle. Write him an account, as short as you like, of the whole affair; enclose the note, it will speak for itself, and he will see from the date on the tradesmen's bills when the debt was incurred. He will look upon it as it is in reality—a *boy's* mistake."

"No," said Robert, doggedly, "you don't know my uncle, he would see it in quite a different light from that; besides, I have got the money now independently of him, and I mean to go my own way.—The fact is, Müller, I'm desperate. Alice has refused me. I'm like a ship that has burst her moorings, and is drifting out to sea. Alice was the only creature who ever cared a jot for me (except you, perhaps), and now that I have not the thought of her to keep me right, I shall go to the devil."

"Poor Robert!" said Arnold, with a pang, "I am heartily grieved for you—from my soul I am."

"Now don't, Arnold! don't pity me, I can't stand it," said Robert, dropping the oars; "I dare say it's all right, and I'll get over it in time, but it is only for Alice's sake, in the hope of winning her, that I have submitted all along to her father. I know I am not worthy of her, but if she could only have made up her mind to take me, that might have been remedied."

"Then you put the question to her point-blank when you were over?"

"I did. There was another fellow dangling after her, and I got mad with jealousy, and perhaps was a little hasty. I certainly might have chosen my time better, for it was just after the fuss with the Rector, and no doubt she thought me a second Absalom."

"Then you think she prefers the other?"

"No, that I am sure she does not!" said Robert, emphatically; "that's one consolation;" and Arnold could not help wishing that he too had some such comfort, cold though it was.

"No, she will never have him, unless her father compels her. He's as old as Methuselah.—Alice must have a fellow with brains. *You* would do for her, Arnold, but then you are booked already, and a capital hit you have made. My cousin Alice excepted, there's not a girl in the world like Mala—they are the only two I ever met without a particle of affectation.—But what's the matter?" he sud-

denly broke off, catching a glimpse of a tell-tale "something" in Arnold's face. "You have not quarrelled, surely?"

"Not exactly. But that's at an end. Mala is all but engaged to her cousin."

Robert dropped the oars, and sat speechless for some moments. "Faithlessness! thy name is woman!" he ejaculated at length. "I could have sworn, that if ever a girl had given her heart away, Mala Bergmann's was in your keeping."

"You have been mistaken," Arnold replied quietly. "I myself have known for long that it never could be, and have gone on blinding my eyes to the truth, so now I must bear the penalty, that's all! Don't let us talk any more about it."

Robert gave a subdued whistle of astonishment, but rowed on steadily for some time without speaking. Presently he exclaimed, with a violent burst of indignation, which had evidently been gathering during his enforced silence, "I hate them all!"

"Hate! whom do you hate?" echoed Arnold, in surprise, recalling his scattered thoughts.

"Why, who but the whole sex!—frivolous, heartless puppets. Deceivers they've been from the beginning, and deceivers they'll be to the end. No sooner has a man been led on by their wiles and apparent interest in him, to make a fool of himself, and centre all the affection——"

"He has to spare from himself," interposed Arnold.

"All his affection on one of them, than he discovers she has been making a cat's-paw of him to catch somebody else.—Don't talk to me of 'woman's love!' sentimental stuff! I have only seen two girls whom I could respect as well as love, and they are no better than their neighbours."

Arnold's gravity was not proof against Robert's immoderate heat. "The simple meaning of this tirade is that your cousins Alice and Mala have found lovers more to their fancy than we unlucky wights—but are they to be blamed for that? Is a woman to have no liberty of choice? Is she meekly to approach the throne of our greatness, and touch the sceptre which we may graciously hold out?"

"I know nothing about thrones and sceptres," returned Robert, gloomily, "all I can say is that women are a delusion and a snare, and I will never more put faith in one of them."

Until now each had been too much engrossed by his own reflections to notice that the sky had gradually overcast; heavy, lurid clouds hung low and threatening, and at intervals gusts of wind came sweeping down the hills. Arnold was the first to observe the change. He glanced round, and perceived that they had reached a point in the river opposite an opening in the mountains, known by the designation of the Teufelsgrube, or Devil's Hole,

and specially avoided in rough weather by the fishermen, who firmly believed in the existence of a hidden whirlpool, supposed to be harmless at all times except during the prevalence of a certain wind. Arnold had often heard the story without paying much heed to it, but now as he beheld the waves surging and boiling on every side, conviction flashed upon him in a manner not altogether agreeable.

"Robert," he said, "let us row out at once!" As he spoke a fierce gust rushing down the valley caught the boat, and made it spin round with fearful rapidity. Quick as thought, Arnold lowered the sail, and a few moments, during which they rowed with the energy of drowning men, effectually placed them beyond the reach of danger.

"By Jove!" said Robert, when they were once more able to proceed leisurely, "that was plucky of you, Arnold! There was I, mooning away, never dreaming of a capsized."

"What are we to do now?" returned Arnold, pausing to look back upon the vortex they had so narrowly escaped; "a storm is brewing, and there is not a house nor a cottage in sight."

"Stop a minute!" cried Robert, carefully scanning the outline of the coast; "I know where we are; ten minutes from here is Von Eckhardt's place. You recollect him—the chief of the Brethren? He has gone to Italy now to join his father, but he gave me *carte blanche* to climb some wonderful old tower

on his property; they say the view from it is superb. That's not much in my line, but I don't see why we should not make use of his name to borrow a couple of horses for our journey home. It would be madness to go back by water."

"But Eckhardt is deserted—uninhabited."

"So it is, and has been ever since the Baroness's death, but there is an old steward or servant of some sort left in charge, so I dare say we shall get all we want."

A distant muttering of thunder warned them to hasten. They speedily made the bend of the river, and found themselves in a small bay, on the shore of which, high and dry, lay a large boat evidently used for the conveyance of fish or garden produce to market.

"You see?" said Robert, triumphantly, "that boat has not been left by people merely seeking refuge like ourselves, or the oars would be there. I vote for pulling ours up alongside." No sooner said than done, and the boat placed in safety, they bethought them of their own, for all around reigned the oppressive stillness so often the precursor of a violent storm. To the right, towering far above them, was a steep rock; on its summit the ruin Robert had alluded to, the sole vestige of a stronghold known for hundreds of years by the significant name of the "Vulture's Nest."

"I should not like to climb that in the dark," said

Robert, following with his eye the faint indication of a winding path which led from the spot where they stood to the tower. "Von Eckhardt did it once for a wager. You know what sort of fellow he was—a mad dare-devil, caring for nothing under the sun. Well, he told me himself that he said his prayers two or three times before he got to the top.—Fancy what a novel sensation it must be, to feel yourself slipping! slipping! making desperate clutches at bushes that give way, while you can't see an inch before you, and hear the stones dislodged by your feet plunge into the water beneath! Ugh!"

Robert was turning away, when Arnold caught him by the arm, exclaiming in a low tone, "Look!"

What they saw must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NYMPHÆA CANDIDA.

IN the archway that had served as an entrance to the courtyard of the castle stood a young girl, looking anxiously at the threatening sky, as if in dread of the approaching storm. Something strange and unusual in her appearance irresistibly fascinated the gaze of the young men, who remained motionless, concealed by the thick brushwood at the foot of the rock. She was in reality above the middle size, and the picturesque manner in which the luxuriant black hair was coiled above the head into a sort of coronet, surmounted by silver arrows, gave the semblance of even greater height. A slender, well-proportioned bust was set off to advantage by a tightly fitting black bodice, and the blue stuff petticoat was not so long as to conceal a large but handsomely shaped foot.

"The Queen of the Gipsies!" said Robert below his breath.

"Diana, rather!" returned Arnold, and in truth the maiden, with her free, erect bearing, might have represented not unaptly the sylvan goddess. As she

made her way down the steep declivity, with a light, firm step which showed no trace of timidity, it became evident that face corresponded to figure. A complexion naturally dark, and browned by exposure to sun and wind, was far from displeasing on account of the perfect health it indicated; the face was an oval, possessed of a pair of large black eyes, heavily fringed, and full red lips, enclosing teeth of brilliant whiteness. Round her neck she wore a curious ornament—a sort of amulet—a serpent, rudely chased in silver. In her hand she carried a large key, and as she descended rapidly, they could hear her singing the refrain of some wild, mournful ballad in a language perfectly unintelligible to Robert. When she had reached the middle of the slope, she suddenly vanished from sight, though the sounds which came floating to them proved that she was completing the descent on the other side.

“What gibberish is that she is singing?” said Robert.

“I have heard that song hundreds of times when I was a boy,” said Arnold, “from an old woman in our village who came originally from the borders of Bohemia. It is a peculiar dialect; depend upon it this girl is from the same part.”

“Did you notice that she had a key in her hand? I should not be surprised if she turns out to be the daughter of Von Eckhardt’s people!”

Under the inspiration of this idea, Robert set off with rapid steps along a path bearing to the left, and in a few moments they came within sight of the mansion erected by more recent lords of Eckhardt. It was a plain, substantial building, with no pretensions to architectural beauty. The closed shutters and generally dilapidated appearance impressed the spectator with a feeling of gloom, by no means relieved by the condition of the surrounding grounds. These had evidently been laid out with an eye to scenic effect, and it was clear that neither pains nor expense had been spared to make the most of the natural advantages offered by the site; but long neglect had almost effaced all that art and culture had effected. The shrubberies had degenerated into a rough, tangled wilderness, through which our friends with difficulty made their way—the ornamental waters into stagnant ponds covered with a green weed; the lawns and flower-beds were overgrown by a rank, coarse grass—the paths slippery with a dank moss. The vases on the terrace, masterpieces of form, served as receptacles for rain-water; here might be seen a Venus, peeping out from a novel drapery formed by some twining plant; there an Apollo, with a shoot of wall-flower doing duty as a head. Further on, an empty pedestal, its late occupant either lying ingloriously at the foot, or nowhere visible. On all sides tokens of a struggle met the eye—the struggle of life, coarse, vigorous, and

active, against decay—premature, but none the less certain.

“This place might be the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty,” said Arnold.

“And that fellow the Evil Genius of the scene,” added Robert, pointing to a perch where, by a silent fountain, a ragged eagle mounted guard. At the approach of footsteps it turned its sightless eyes towards the intruders, flapping its wings violently, and screaming in a way which made them glad to observe that he was fastened by a chain.

“Poor blind wretch! What an existence his must be!” said Robert. “I say, Arnold, let us get out of this! it’s enough to give a fellow the blues for the rest of his life. Hist! there’s the gipsy again!” As he spoke they observed through the trees the girl they had seen, hastening in the direction of the river, her head and shoulders enveloped in a cloak. Making for the spot whence she had emerged, they found themselves in a part of the grounds the homely neatness of which contrasted agreeably with that they had just quitted. It was apparently used as a market garden; fruit-trees and vegetables flourished luxuriantly; and in their midst, surrounded by quaintly shaped plots still bright with autumn flowers, was a small cottage. The shelter had not been reached too soon, for the rain began to fall in large, heavy drops as Robert accosted a young man who appeared hastily with

gardening tools upon his shoulder, and requested permission to enter the cottage until the storm should have passed. On hearing the baron's name the new comer vanished into the house, whence he presently returned with an elderly woman, evidently the mistress of the establishment. A well-preserved figure and handsome face testified to her having been possessed in her day of no ordinary attractions, although their effect was now completely neutralized by a certain air of sharpness and sourness which invested her whole person, and gave a snappishness to her very gait.

"Pray come in, gentlemen!" she said, in a most peculiar voice. The words seemed thrown out of the mouth rather than enunciated in the ordinary way; "any friend of his lordship's is entitled to the best we have, though 'tis but a poor place."

The room into which she ushered them was long and narrow, occupying the first floor of the cottage, and serving for kitchen as well as parlour, if one might judge from the sausages and smoked beef that hung from a beam dividing the low ceiling. It was lighted by a window at either end, at one of which sat an old man engaged in sorting out seeds of various kinds into packets. He rose as they entered, and repeating his wife's invitation, bade her set milk and bread upon the table, saying, "There was a day, young sirs, when I could have given you wine of my own growing, but you must take the will for the

deed, and kindly accept what we have to offer you." There was a certain quiet dignity about the old gardener that contrasted strongly with his wife's abruptness, and the young men hastened to thank him for his hospitality, which, to tell the truth, came very *à propos* after their long pull.

The storm now began in earnest—vivid lightning flashes made the gloom appear greater by contrast, and the rain poured in torrents. Robert seemed to take great interest in their place of refuge, doubtless because it was the first German peasant-house he had ever been in; and scrutinized the whole contents of the room, from the Marriage Certificate—with its gorgeously embroidered frame in the place of honour on the wall opposite the door—to the newly sprinkled sand upon the floor. For some time no one spoke, the woman being apparently engrossed by her ironing at the further window, the old man by his seeds, while the young gardener paused every now and then in his work, looked out uneasily, and frequently went to the door.

"May I ask, sir, if it is long since you heard from our young baron?" inquired the old man of Robert.

"He has only written to me once since he left."

"And he did not mention when my lord his father intended returning?"

"On the contrary, he seemed to think he would be away for several years yet. They have a villa at Florence."

The old man shook his head and sighed. "Ah! it's a sad thing for a place when the master's away! I've done my best to keep it up, but it's all going to wreck and ruin—all to wreck and ruin!"

"Yes," chimed in his wife, "and soon we shall have no roof left to cover us; this old house won't stand many more winters. And the Herr Baron promised us a new one ten years ago—ten years ago, gentlemen! and not a stone of it laid yet! But promises are made to be broken."

"Nanny! Nanny!" said the husband, uneasily, "thy tongue runs too fast. No doubt the Herr Baron would have kept his word had he been able. He has had many trials, poor gentleman!"

"And poor folk have their trials too, only they must bide at home and bear them," retorted the wife, spitefully. "After thy long years of service—not to have a *besuchzimmer* to show the gentlemen into!" It was plain that the want of the *besuchzimmer*, (*Anglice* parlour) rankled in their hostess's mind.

Robert crossed the room and said good-naturedly, "Well, so far as I am concerned, I am delighted that you have no *besuchzimmer*, for it gives me a chance of being initiated into the mysteries of ironing. I have long had a great desire to know how all those wonderful frills and puffings are managed—now I shall learn the secret. How magnificently you do these things!" he continued, taking up a shirt, and pretending to examine it minutely. "I

only wish my laundress turned out anything half so dainty."

Madame was not insensible to the compliment; her brow relaxed, and a grim smile of complacency hovered about her lip, as she said with a deprecatory cough, "There's no mystery about it, sir, but it's an art that don't do to be trifled with."

"Do you hear that, Arnold?" said Robert in English, with a laugh, "come and take a lesson in a new branch of art."

With some inward wonderment at Robert's sudden politeness to the dame, whom but a few minutes before he had characterized in a stage aside as a "second Xantippe," Arnold complied, and joined him in watching the deft movements of their hostess, who, roused by the unwonted excitement of plying her vocation under the admiring eyes of such distinguished spectators, exerted herself to the utmost, seizing upon crumpled linen rags, and turning them out the next moment, like a domestic *prestidigitateuse*, faultlessly glossy and steaming, while her face glowed with satisfaction, and even her voice lost a little of its sharpness. Of course Robert insisted upon putting his newly acquired knowledge into practice, the result of which was a little hole the size of an English sovereign, as he demonstrated to the satisfaction of Frau Bekker, by one he produced from his pocket—but did not replace there.

"No doubt you came here to see the tower, gentlemen?" said the old man.

"No, we were merely rowing on the river for pleasure, and were nearly capsized at the *Teufelsgrube*."

"Lord save us!" ejaculated the woman, letting fall her iron in her astonishment, while her husband added, "You surely did not venture near the *Teufelsgrube* in a rowing-boat to-day?"

"Yes, that we did," said Arnold, laughing; "who could have foretold this particular wind for to-day?"

"Franz there," said the old man, pointing to his assistant, "or any of the fishermen about. You may be thankful you have escaped with your lives."

"Yes, that you may!" added Franz; "the Maiden does not often let any one go after being so nearly within her reach."

"What fool's talk is that?" said the woman, angrily; "dost imagine that any girl with wit to catch a man would live fish-wise under the water?"

"'Tis all in one of Dida's songs, mother," responded Franz, submissively.

"What Dida says is gospel to thee, boy. I have no patience with it.—Did you ever hear the like, gentlemen?" she added, appealing to the strangers.

"What is that?" said Arnold, smiling; "is the river haunted by a mermaid?"

"Ay, that it is. Had you passed by the *Teufelsgrube* at night, you would have seen her deep down

through the calm water, seated on a rock ; and had you not instantly thought on the Blessed Virgin and all the saints, you would have been obliged to jump from the boat and go to her. By day she has no power to let herself be seen, but when she desires to secure any one passing overhead, she agitates the water by spells, so that it foams and tosses like a whirlpool, until the boat is gradually sucked underneath to her." Franz related this with a gravity which left no doubt of his faith in it.

"Your mermaid is hardly orthodox," observed Arnold ; "she ought to show herself above water, combing her long hair."

"Surely *you* don't believe in such stuff, sir ?" said Frau Bekker, in amazement.

"O yes, he does," replied Robert, mischievously ; "he is longing to hear the song about it. Perhaps the Fräulein, your daughter, would kindly let us hear it ?"

"If you mean Dida, sir, she is no child of mine," said the woman, drily, while her husband exclaimed, "Wife, where is Dida ?—surely not exposed to this rain ?"

"That is more than likely," she replied, in the same tone, and Franz added, "I saw her going towards the river, and begged her to come in, but she would not." The old man rose, and putting on a heavy cloak, left the house in search of the truant, accompanied by Franz ; and heedless of the remon-

stances of his wife, who screamed after him as long as he was within sight, "Bekker, Bekker! do mind your rheumatism!"

"Strange girl, this Dida," said Robert. "I must find out who she is;" and accordingly on Frau Bekker's return, he opened fire with "So the Fräulein has a fancy for being out in a thunderstorm?"

"She has a *fancy* for doing everything that nobody else would dream of, sir," was the answer, given with an increase of jerkiness; "but what's bred in the bone must out in the flesh. The worry and fret I have with that girl will soon bring me to my grave; and what provokes me most is that Bekker can see nothing wrong in her; and as for Franz—" Frau Bekker paused for want of words sufficiently strong.

"That is hardly to be wondered at," said Arnold; "she seems no ordinary girl."

"So my husband says," with a toss of the head; "he will have it that she is a bit of a genius, forsooth. I've no doubt he imagines her to be made of different clay from other mortals. But I'm getting tired of that sort of thing—dead tired. It's bad enough to have a genius for a husband, without a chit of a girl setting up in that line."

"And in what does her genius consist, may I ask?"

"You *may* ask, sir. It's more than I've ever been able to discover. They say she has a wonderful know-

ledge of plants ; but that is nothing so wonderful for one brought up in the woods ; and then she can put a nosegay together better than most folk. But, bless you, what's that ?”

“ Oh, nothing—nothing at all !” said Robert, laughing.

“ Can she iron a collar, or stitch a shirt fit to be seen ? Not she. Although many's the hour I've stood over her (and she as stubborn as a mule all the while) trying to train her into Christian ways, until Bekker interfered in his wisdom, and insisted that she should have her own way, and help him out of doors.”

“ Then I suppose these bright flower-beds are her care ?”

“ Oh dear yes ! nothing so useful as vegetables for Dida. *That* is all left to Franz, while she wanders about among the mountains with Bekker, seeking plants for their fine collection up-stairs.—Nice life for a young girl ! When I was her age, I stopped at home, cooked and scrubbed, stitched and spun, never thought of going beyond the door, except of a Sunday. I wonder what would become of the world if people were all to follow the ‘ bent of their genius,’ as Bekker says—the bent of their idleness and self-will, as *I* say ? Well, well, I only hope no evil may come of it.” The tone in which this hope was uttered expressed something very different from its apparent tenor. Hardly had she finished, when the door

opened, and the object of her animadversions entered—her face very pale, her eyes glowing, the rain-drops glistening on her hair. At the unexpected sight of strangers she started, and would have retreated, when Frau Bekker's rough "Hast thou no manners before thy betters, child?" elicited a slight half-defiant inclination of the head, more resembling the greeting of some court dame than the curtsy of a peasant girl.

"Is that a way to behave to friends of thy master?" said Frau Bekker, as she jerked the iron with unnecessary violence.

"The baron is not *my* master," returned the girl, a flush mounting to her brow. Robert offered her a chair, but she had already seated herself by the table and begun her work, which consisted in cutting coloured paper into different fanciful shapes, evidently for the purpose of tying round bouquets.

For some time he watched her nimble fingers in silence. At length he said, "So you are not afraid of being out in a thunderstorm, Fräulein?"

"Afraid! Of what?" she replied, with a sudden glance.

"Lightning is dangerous."

"Only to those who fear it. I might be afraid were I pent up within four walls—stifled, suffocated. But without, while the Voice bounds from hill to hill, and the Flame darts from heaven—ah! that is glorious."

Frau Bekker seemed on the point of making some sharp remark, when her husband entered, and her lips snapped grimly to again. Dida rose, and gently removed the old man's dripping cloak. "Where hast thou been, my child?" he said, reproachfully.

"Dear little father!" replied the girl, coaxingly, "thou knowest that to-day I must be free." Bekker shook his head and resumed his work, while Dida continued, "But Franz—where is he?"

"I left him looking for thee."

"I will call him; he would hear me though he were at the *Teufelsgrube* itself," and going to the door she pronounced his name several times in a clear voice, which, as she had predicted, speedily brought the young man to her side.

By this time the rain had ceased, and the sun shone out in his strength, a fact proclaimed on all sides by a thousand warblers. On Dida also the cool fresh air that had replaced the sultry heat was not without effect; her countenance beamed with a bright, animated expression, and her eyes lost their wild, excited look. The young men had no longer any excuse for lingering. As they rose to go, Bekker said,—

"Your boat shall be well taken care of, gentlemen. Franz shall tow it up to the town to-morrow behind the market boat."

"Pray don't give yourself that trouble!" cried

Robert, with some eagerness. "I shall come myself to fetch it."

"Just as you please, sir. How do you propose returning this evening? The stage passes close by in a few minutes. There are always a few vacant seats."

Arnold suggested that as the storm was over, they should row back to Städtlein, but to this Robert would not consent, averring that it was by no means safe, and they finally agreed to go by the stage-coach. Old Bekker took his hat and stick to conduct them to the high road, and after repeating their obligations to the hostess, they left the cottage. Dida was in her garden, tying up some plants that had been beaten down by the rain. As Arnold passed, she gave him a bouquet of rare and curious flowers, some wild, some cultivated, arranged with exquisite taste, and surrounded by one of the fancy papers she had been engaged in cutting.

"This is for me?" said Arnold, surprised, as he had not addressed a word to her indoors.

"Yes, but only to give to her whom you love best."

"Is there none for me?" said Robert.

"No!" she replied, half shyly, half saucily, "I don't know yet whether I like you or not. Perhaps I may have made up my mind before you come to-morrow."

"Dida! Dida!" said Bekker, reproachfully, but Dida only laughed, and went on tying up her flowers.

"Well, never mind, pretty one! I like you," said Robert, although it must be owned that he looked rather mortified.

"You must not take what she says amiss," said the old gardener anxiously, as they walked on; "she does not mean it for rudeness—'tis only her way."

"She is a little gipsy!" returned Robert, laughing.

"She is, sir; you've hit the nail on the head! but a thorough honest, dear little soul, in spite of that, is Candida!"

"*Candida*! what a curious name!"

"I dare say you may think it strange, but it seemed only natural to me to call her after what led me to her."

"Led you to her! I don't understand," said Robert.

"Well, sir, as the stage is long of coming up, I'll tell you Dida's story, so far as I know it myself, and then, perhaps, you won't think so badly of her queer ways."

Robert assured him that, on the contrary, Dida's "ways" amused him; but the old man had seen the tell-tale look on his face, and persisted in attributing it to vexation. "I am quite aware," he went on, "that she is anything but what is called *mannerly*; but you may as well try to make the wind blow according to your wish, as to put any restriction on Dida."

"I understand perfectly ; but your story ? " said Robert, impatiently, as they seated themselves on a rough bench close to the high road.

" Well, sir, to begin. Some fourteen years ago I was travelling among the mountains in Bohemia. The object of my journey requires a little explanation. Perhaps you know that the Herr Baron is, or rather was, a great botanist ? "

Yes, Robert had heard something about it.

" He has given it all up since his lady's death, but in those days his greatest pleasure consisted in forming grand collections of dried plants, and in gathering, in these grounds through which we have been walking, every rare specimen obtainable. You may not think it, gentlemen," he continued, looking round, " but very few places in Germany can boast of the immense variety of shrubs to be seen here. It's fast going to destruction. I've done my best, but—" and he shook his head despondently.

" It will be all right when your young Baron comes into possession," said Robert, with an inward groan at the old man's " long-windedness."

" I fear not, sir ! I fear not. He has not his father's tastes. However, when I first came here as a young man, his lordship was pleased to take a deal of notice of me (for I had been plant-mad ever since I was a boy), and he raised me from one post to another, until I was entrusted with the care of his collections. Then, some twenty years ago, came that

sad event—the Baroness died, and my lord seemed to lose all interest in life. He presented his museum to the town of Städtlein, and went away to foreign parts. Well, gentlemen, I had always been accustomed to take long excursions with my master in search of different plants we required, and this was known to several scientific gentlemen, one of whom gave me the commission to procure for him a specimen of the *Nymphæa candida*, discovered by the botanist Presl.—I suppose you know, gentlemen, that it was supposed at that time to be a distinct variety of the *Nymphæaceæ*, and to be indigenous to Bohemia?”

“No,” said Robert, with another groan, “we are not so learned.”

I beg your pardon, sir,” resumed the old man, with a deprecatory gesture; “I thought you might probably take an interest in the science. The *Nymphæa* of which I was in search was afterwards found to be but a variety of the common water-lily —*Nymphæa* ——”

“Yes, yes, yes!” burst forth Robert, “we understand all that perfectly. But Dida? Herr Bekker! Dida? You learned men always will wander away from the point.”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” returned the old man who was probably too much accustomed to be snubbed by his wife, to be indignant at Robert’s brusquerie; “the Czechish Flora is a very interesting

one, and I dare say I *do* become tedious when I get on that point.—Well, as I was saying, the time of my visit was the month of May. The summer and autumn of the previous year had been very wet, so that the wheat had rotted in the ground from excessive moisture, and there was great want in the hilly districts, especially among the mining folk. I heard of great bands of them leaving their homes and going south in search of work and food, or roaming about the country gipsy-fashion ; but for several weeks I myself saw nothing.

“ However, one evening about six o’clock, as I was returning home after a long day’s wandering, I came suddenly upon a large encampment in a pine-forest ; there might be, perhaps, two hundred of them—men, women, children, dogs, and asses—all apparently settling for the night. Several large fires were burning, and each party busily engaged in cooking hares, rabbits, small birds, and other game that looked suspiciously like barn-door fowls. As I told you, I had been on my feet all day, since early dawn, with nothing to eat but a dry crust—sometimes wading up to my knees in muddy water after a supposed *Candida*—and I felt thoroughly chilled and faint. How I was to manage the remaining five or six miles to the village, I did not know. Struck, I suppose, by my famished look, a brawny fellow called out to me as I was passing, and bade me stay and take pot-luck with his party ; and the fire was so

cheerful, and the smell from the kettle hung over it so appetizing, that I needed no second invitation. I must say, I never tasted a better stew, though, had I been less hungry, the jokes that were bandied about regarding the good folk who had unwittingly supplied us with a meal, might have deprived it of its relish.

“After supper we grew very sociable, and I learned that the troop was composed partly of miners; partly of *echt* Bohemian gipsies. My host (as I suppose I must call him, although he entertained me at the expense of others) was a most intelligent man. It is to be feared that his lawless life was not without attractions for him; but he declared that so soon as he met with work he would abandon his wild comrades. Presently, our circle was joined by several desperate-looking fellows, who, seeing a stranger in the camp, desired to know my business. Luckily! there was not a pin to choose between my clothes and theirs, or it might have gone hardly with me. After I had satisfied their inquiries, and my services as a doctor had been requisitioned by several with cut feet and aching limbs (for whom I was able to prescribe simple remedies from my knowledge of the herbs that grew around), one man, quieter than the rest, informed me that he thought he could put me on the right track for my *Candida*; and sure enough, gentlemen, it was through him that I afterwards found it. This by the way!

well as Robert, had listened with deep interest to the narrative.

"No, sir, the other way, I think. If the mother had been a Bohemian, the child would have spoken the language." The old man paused for a minute ; then added, "Much as I love the girl (and indeed she is almost all I have to live for), I sometimes think I have done wrong in attempting to bring her up."

"How so ?" inquired Robert, in surprise.

"She don't take kindly to the life. She is never happy except when roaming free among the hills by my side."

"Perhaps your wife hardly understands her?" said Arnold.

"That's the real reason, I fear," returned Bekker, sorrowfully. "It's the old story of the hen hatching the duckling. My wife is a good woman, but Dida's wild blood puzzles her."

At this moment the stage-coach appeared. Arnold had only time to shake the worthy old man heartily by the hand, and say, "Keep up your heart, Herr Bekker ! you have done nobly by Dida, and all will come right with time."

"I try to think so," he replied, and as the two young men took their places on the top of the coach, he turned slowly back to the desolate shrubbery.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SECRET DREAD.

THE stage-coach passed by the Director's house. Mala was at the dining-room window. Arnold saw her turn hastily, and the next moment she stood at the door to receive him.

"Dear Arnold!" she exclaimed, "we have been so uneasy about you. Surely you were not on the river during the thunderstorm?"

Never had he seen her so lovely! Dida was fresh in his recollection—a magnificent type of womanhood; but, compared to this fragile, delicate being, Dida was as clay to crystal. For a moment, the longing to clasp her to his breast was almost too strong to be resisted—but only for a moment. There was something about Mala this evening that he had never observed before—a trembling flutter of expectant happiness; the thrill of a new, strange joy; an undefinable *something*, that sent him back into himself with the sudden chill which had fallen upon him in the vineyard. He followed her into the dining-room, and gave her Dida's bouquet. In

general, Mala would have been delighted with its unfamiliar blossoms—to-night, however, she had no eyes for it, but placed it negligently on a side-table, where Arnold found it a few days after—faded and withered.

“Your cousin, M. Descroix, is he gone?” he asked.

“Not yet—Lucien is with papa. He leaves in half an hour.”

Dinner was over. Mala rang for some refreshment for Arnold, and seated herself near him with her work, ostensibly for the purpose of conversation. But after the first few sentences, a silence fell upon them both—not a silence of embarrassment, for Mala’s face still wore that look of abstracted, perfect happiness; but Arnold knew well that *he* had no place in her thoughts. So far as he was concerned she might have been two miles, instead of two yards, from him. He ate a few mouthfuls, pushed his plate away, and relapsed into his own gloomy reflections. Suddenly, Mala awoke from her reverie with a start. “How very hospitable I am!” she exclaimed with a laugh; “you cannot eat, Arnold? you are over fatigued. Stay! I know something that will tempt you;” and, disappearing for an instant, she returned with a little basket, which she placed on the table saying, “here are some of the white grapes you and I plucked the other day.”

“Mala,” said Arnold, starting up passionately,

"do you want to drive me mad?" and he strode to the window. The grapes fell from Mala's hand; she turned deadly pale, and seemed about to speak, when the opening of the study-door struck upon her ear, succeeded by a whirlwind on the stairs, and in a moment she was in Lucien's arms.

Must he see that a second time?

"It is all settled, my darling," Arnold heard him say, and he waited to hear no more. He stole unperceived from the room, gained his own, and in solitude and darkness fought the old battle over again.

By degrees he recovered his composure, and resolved to go and ascertain whether Wallraf had returned from Russia or not—he would spend the evening with him—or walk about—anything rather than face the members of the family in his present mood. As he was passing along the corridor to put this design into execution, the Director called out "Arnold! is that you?"

Escape was impossible, and he entered the study. The only light in the room came from the moonbeams, which streamed in at the open window where Herr Bergmann sat, his head resting on his hand, his whole attitude indicating a frame of mind very different from his usual vigorous activity.

"Dear sir! are you ill?" said Arnold, his own trouble retreating into the background.

"Not in body, Arnold," said the Director with a sigh.

Arnold did not ask what had happened ; he silently sat down in his usual place, and awaited what was to follow. At length he said : " M. Descroix is gone ? "

" Yes ! would that he had never come !—Arnold ! continued the Director abruptly, " Do you not love Mala ? "

" You know how I love her ! " said Arnold, startled by the suddenness of the question.

" Why have you never told her of it, then ? "

" You know my circumstances, Herr Director. What right had I to speak of love to Mala ? "

" *Circumstances !* Have I not enough for you both ? Rather than sacrifice your paltry pride, Arnold, you will sacrifice her."

" What do you mean ? " Arnold said, astounded.

" Mean ! What should I mean but what I say ? Had you chosen to put your independence into your pocket, and let Mala *see* that you loved her, do you think she would ever have chosen Lucien ? "

However flattering this view of the case might be to Arnold's vanity, he put it aside at once as illusory : " You are mistaken," he said gently. " Mala would not give up her cousin Lucien for me or any one else. Her affection for him is too deep-rooted—it has grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength."

" I tell you, Arnold, I am *not* mistaken ! Mala does not know her own mind yet. This love for

Lucien is a whim, a fancy, a contradiction—she knows that I am against it, and for that reason she is the more bent upon it.”

“Dear Director,” said Arnold, “when did Mala ever offer the slightest opposition to a wish of yours? Believe me, what you call a *whim* is something very different.”

“Arnold,” said Herr Bergmann after a pause, “I will tell you frankly, that it is to you, of all men, I would most willingly have given my daughter—you know I am honest in saying this. But as for Lucien! I have a strange misgiving. Not that there is anything against him! So far as I know, he has acted honourably enough since he left my roof. I ought to feel confidence in him; but his father,” continued the Director in fierce agitation, “his father was a villain! a villain! O God! if my poor sister’s fate should be Mala’s!”

Arnold listened in pained surprise; hitherto he had heard no particulars regarding M. Descroix.

“It is perhaps my own fault that things should have taken this course,” the Director went on; “but, boy and girl as they were, who could have foreseen this result? Arnold, I believe your interest in Mala is second only to my own; do you not think that, if they were kept apart, her love for Lucien might die out?”

What would not Arnold have given to be able to answer as the Director expected! The truth must be

spoken: "Why do you torture me?" he exclaimed, "Mala would give up home, friends—her own life—for Lucien."

"Then Heaven help her, and us too!" muttered Herr Bergmann; "forgive my fretfulness, Arnold. If you knew all that I know, you would not wonder at it. My poor boy!" he added tenderly, "the blow has fallen upon you too. But you must not give up hope—I will not hear of their being formally engaged for another year yet. In that time many things may take place. I only wish there was some vacant post here, that Lucien might come to Städtlein. I don't feel sure of him at such a distance——"

At this moment they were interrupted by the entrance of several members of the committee on business, and Arnold went to his room, his own gloomy forebodings strengthened by what he had heard.

He was somewhat startled to observe a figure by the window, half-concealed by the curtain—it was the Alte. "What! here alone, and in the dark?" he exclaimed, as he proceeded to light the lamp.

"It is not necessary," said the old man, arresting his arm, "we can talk better so. Sit down here, I have something to ask you."

Arnold took the chair the Alte placed, wondering what was coming next.

The old man looked cautiously round, examined the door to see that it was properly secured, and

returning on tiptoe to his place, said in a low, mysterious voice: "Why have you allowed Lucien to steal a march upon you?"

"Steal a march upon me? I don't understand you," said Arnold, aghast at finding his secret known.

"Well, then! Why have you allowed him to *supplant* you? if you like that term better."

"Lucien supplant me! Why, Herr Schmidt, if things had taken a different course, it is I who would have supplanted him."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that Mala had given her affections to her cousin long before she knew me—before I had the chance of winning them."

"You are mistaken! you are mistaken!" cried the Alte vehemently. "Mala loves you—I know she does; but Lucien casts a spell over her while he is here. He is bad—he is heartless—he is a demon! I will not, *will* not let him have Mala. I have told Gottlob so; I have told him that my curse shall follow him if he gives that child, that innocent girl, to one who cannot fail to make her miserable."

"But, Alte, how is it to be avoided? Even if Lucien were all you describe him (and I think you exaggerate his bad qualities), even if all this were true, Mala loves him."

"*I* exaggerate his bad qualities!" shrieked the old man; "do you know what his father was?—do you know what his father was?"

"No, nor do I care to know," said Arnold, turning away; "we are not God, that we should presume to visit the sins of the father upon the son."

"Camille Descroix was a gambler," continued the Alte, heedless of the interruption, "a roué, a man who had no aim in life beyond the gratification of his own pleasures. He it was who led my poor boy astray—my Hermann;" for a moment the old man's voice was choked. "I have to thank him that I am now childless. He spent every farthing of his wife's money; ill-treated her cruelly to force her to borrow from her brother; and, when that resource failed, deserted her and her child. Gottlob found them starving—*starving* in a wretched hovel in Paris." He paused to recover breath, and Arnold said:

"Still, all this is not to the point, Alte. Lucien may not have inherited his father's disposition; the recollection of his own sufferings, the thought of his mother, the knowledge of what he owes to his uncle, may restrain him."

The Alte shook his head. "Can the leopard change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin? I have watched him from a boy; I have marked his ways and followed his steps many a time when he little thought he was observed. I have seen the under-current that directs the whole course of his life; and I tell you that, so soon as he can throw off the mask with impunity, he will show himself in his true colours—false, selfish, self-seeking like his father

before him. Well, Arnold," the old man went on more quietly, "I did not come here to tell you all this. I imagined you would be the last to defend him. If you will only be sensible, and listen to reason, all may yet be right."

"Both you and the Director seem to be labouring under some extraordinary delusion," said Arnold, irritably. His disappointment was enough to bear, without these implied hints that he might have remedied it had he chosen. "I do not see that anything *I* can do or say will avert this evil. Mala is as good as engaged to her cousin."

"No, no, not for another year!" cried the Alte, eagerly; "Gottlob has told them both so. And, Arnold, in that time—Lucien away, you constantly on the spot—what might you not effect for yourself?—Nay, hear me out," as Arnold seemed on the point of interrupting him. "Do you think I have eyes and ears for nothing? Do you imagine I cannot see that Mala is all in all to you? Do I not know the reason that has hitherto kept you from speaking to Gottlob of your wishes? But now, suppose this barrier removed, what then?"

"It would make no difference," returned Arnold, amazed at the Alte's interest in himself; "it would be too late."

"Nay, don't say so, Arnold; be reasonable, be guided by me."

"My dear, good sir! I really don't see what all
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this is tending to. I have not the slightest chance of superseding Lucien, and if I had, as you have just reminded me, I am not in a position to marry."

"To-morrow you will be in a better position than Lucien," said the Alte, triumphantly; "read that!" and he pushed a letter towards him.

"From Wallraf?" cried Arnold, as he sprang up and lit the lamp.

"Yes! he was here this afternoon wanting to see either you or Gottlob. Gottlob was engaged; you were out; so he went away, and said he would write you."

As Arnold expected, Wallraf had at length received the appointment at St. Petersburg.—He sat for a while with the note in his hand, in painful deliberation.

"Well?" said the Alte, peevishly; "you don't seem particularly pleased?"

"It is very good of Wallraf," Arnold replied, mechanically, as he rose and took his hat.

"Where are you going?" said the Alte, in alarm.

"I must see Wallraf to-night."

"Let me go with you, then," cried the old man; "you hot-headed boys are not to be trusted." But Arnold made no reply; he strode downstairs, and was in the street before the Alte had recovered from his surprise.

When he thought himself secure from interference, he paused to recover breath. A fresh breeze came

sweeping past, accompanied by a slight shower. He bared his head, and the cooling drops fell gently on his burning temples.—Was he doing right? Was the step he was about to take called for?—He dared not stay to settle the question, but pressed onwards to Wallraf's house. The door stood open; he found his way up the dark staircase. Wallraf was alone, at his desk, so absorbed that he did not observe Arnold until the latter touched him on the shoulder.

"Arnold! how you startled me! I suppose you have got my note?"

"Yes," said Arnold, absently—and paused. "Wallraf, will you do me a favour?"

"Anything in reason, my dear fellow."

"Will you use your interest to secure this post for Lucien Descroix?"

Wallraf stared at him, as if he doubted his being in his senses. "Do you know what you are asking *me* of all people in the world?" he said at length; "do you know what an opportunity you are throwing away?"

"I know it all," Arnold replied, huskily; "but Lucien must be brought here; the Director wishes it; he is engaged to Mala."

For some moments Wallraf sat as if turned to stone. "Mala engaged to Lucien—not to *you*! and Bergmann has given his consent?"

Arnold did not speak, but he could not meet Wallraf's searching glance, and turned away.

"My poor Arnold! I see how it is. There is a fatality here; the son will blight your life as the father blighted mine.—Come with me to Russia?"

Arnold shook his head. "I cannot leave the Director. You will do what I ask, Wallraf?"

"I will," said Wallraf, heartily, adding, with a sorrowful glance at the young man, "*God* help you, Arnold! I too have come through the fire, and I know how empty words of comfort are."

Arnold grasped his hand, and left the house. But Wallraf did not resume his writing again that night.

Thus, Arnold found himself assisting his rival to steal from him his treasure.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A TETE-A-TETE ON THE VULTURE'S NEST.

It will easily be believed that Arnold had little time or inclination to think of the boat left at Eckhardt. This promise to accompany Robert there next day passed entirely from his memory; and strange to say, the Baronet never came to remind him of it. Stranger still, in spite of the tirade against woman-kind, which had nearly cost them their lives at the Teufelsgrube, Robert was haunted by a pair of black eyes, and perplexed by the last remark of their owner. What did Dida mean by it? Was it a "*feeler*" thrown out to ascertain whether he intended returning or not? In any case, there could be no harm done by going to fetch the boat.

The shadows had hardly begun to lengthen as Robert entered the little cove, and leaping ashore, drew the boat he had borrowed out of reach of the tide alongside his own, which had been carefully covered with a tarpauling. With a hasty glance at the ruin, as though expecting once more to see a figure within the arch, he struck into the path through the shrubbery. It was a glorious afternoon,

the air filled by a flood of light that softened the harsh coarse outline of neglect with a mellow kindness. The silence which had awed and oppressed them on their first visit was gone, banished by myriads of busy songsters, the only creatures apparently that profited by the abandonment of the place. Soon Robert came within sight of the cottage, but paused to watch a little play that was being enacted—not for his benefit.

On a ladder, propped against the wall of the house, stood Franz, engaged in nailing up portions of the clematis which, growing along the entire front, had been exposed to the violence of yesterday's storm, and detached in several places. At the foot was Dida, her straw-hat slung over her arm, a little basket in her hand filled with nails, scraps of baize, and other articles required for the repairing of the damage. This she had evidently secured by illegal means, and now made her own use of—one moment dangling a scrap of cloth within reach of Franz, then withdrawing it so suddenly that his precipitate, headlong descent appeared inevitable, while each ineffectual effort on his part to grasp it elicited a fresh burst of laughter.

"Come now, Dida! do, Dida, be sensible!" pleaded the victim, looking down upon his tormentor with an expression indicative of anything but displeasure.

"I do love to tease you!" was the only answer he received, as she of the black eyes moved a step or

two further off, in the expectation that Franz would give chase for the recovery of his tools. In this, however, she was mistaken ; some tendrils higher up, which could be fastened without aid from the basket, caught his eye, and he mounted on the roof. The opportunity did not escape Dida's quick glance. In an instant, the ladder had deserted the house for a tree a few yards off, and seating herself on its lowest rung, while she tied on her hat, Dida cried, "Adieu, Franz ! sit by the chimney like the storks—there is milk-soup cooking below." Franz turned round, perceived the prank played upon him, and dropped down resignedly on the ledge, his broad face wearing an aspect of comic patience. Laughing at the success of her teasing-powers, Dida turned to make her escape, and at the same moment perceived Robert. The basket fell from her hand, scattering nails and baize in every direction, while her cheeks grew scarlet with confusion.

"Allow me to remedy the mischief," said Robert, as he stooped to replace the contents. "I did not mean to startle you." By the time the various articles were collected together, Dida's embarrassment had taken flight.

"Ah !" she exclaimed frankly, "I thought you would come to-day !"

Robert glanced round for the ladder, but in the interim the captive had effected his own deliverance by means of a rain-pipe, and stood once more on

terra firma, looking not a little sheepish at having been caught by a stranger making what he called a "spectacle" of himself. Robert's off-hand manner and inquiries after his boat soon dispelled his awkwardness, and he proceeded in search of the oars.

"How happy you must be to own such a boat," said Dida. "Father says he never saw one so well put together."

"It is an English boat. I am glad you like it. But you can hardly judge of it on shore. Will you give me the pleasure of sailing a little way in it?"

"Ah! that would be heavenly!" she exclaimed; adding, with a sigh, "but not to-day, Herr Engländer. Father and mother are both in the town, and I must remain here."

"But Franz is here."

"Franz would not like me to go in any boat but his," said Dida, with a laugh; "but perhaps some other day you will be sailing past?"

"Certainly," Robert replied. "I am on the river nearly every afternoon," and he pacified his conscience by vowing that this little fiction should speedily become fact. As Franz approached, an oar on each shoulder, he became sensible of a feeling of annoyance—(now he would have to go, there was no longer any excuse for remaining)—when his eye was attracted by a large key hanging from Dida's girdle. To be sure! The tower! How could he be so stupid as to forget it? Turning to Dida, he said: "I am sorry

your father is not at home. I should like to ascend the tower. On a clear day like this, the view from it must be magnificent."

"That you can still do," rejoined Dida, with alacrity; "here is the key! Franz," she added; "you had better take the oars to the beach, while I show the gentleman the way to the tower."

The young man hesitated. "You know," he said in a whisper that did not escape Robert, "father will not have the tower shown to strangers, unless he is there himself."

"Have you no head upon your shoulders?" replied Dida in the same tone, but with some asperity; "the gentleman is a friend of the Herr Baron."

Evidently, Franz did not like the arrangement; but he was not disposed to question any act of Dida's, and therefore went off submissively in the direction of the river.

Dida looked round with a bright face. "Franz is very good," she said, "but he is also very tiresome. Will you follow me, Herr Engländer?" and she proceeded along a path behind the cottage with a step so rapid, that it was all Robert could do to keep pace with her. As he toiled up the steep ascent, his eyes and thoughts were completely filled by the figure before them—the prettily-moulded bust, the free, unconstrained gait; the firm, almost masculine tread. The heat, which compelled him to pause frequently to wipe the perspiration from his brow, had

apparently no effect on her, for, springing upwards with the lightness of a young gazelle, she arrived at the top several minutes before him, and stood leaning against the arch, key in hand, with something of a smile of contempt for his slower movements. Robert seated himself on a stone to rest, while she proceeded to unlock the cumbrous door of the old tower.

From the area of the rock on which it was built, the Vulture's Nest, when entire, could not have been by any means of large dimensions; but the portion still standing conclusively proved its immense strength. Formed of massive, rough-hewn stones (the size of which caused the spectator to wonder how in the non-engineering days of a bygone age their transportation to that almost inaccessible spot had been effected), perforated at irregular intervals by narrow slits for the admission of light and air, and strongly casemated, the fortress must have been well-nigh impregnable, and a very small garrison sufficient for the defence of the one side on which the rock might be easily scaled—that, namely, towards the cottage, away from the river. The castle had played no unimportant part during the Thirty Years' War, and many were the legends related by Dida in her capacity of cicerone. These wild stirring times seemed to possess a peculiar charm for her, and especially did she describe with enthusiasm the mournful and yet jubilant exit of the Lady Ermengarde, of saintly memory, through the Western

Portal—the very spot where they now stood—during a violent and protracted siege. Allowed to take with her whatever seemed most precious in her eyes, did she not appear laden with the goodly person of her lord and master, and carry him off in triumph through the midst of the discomfited enemy?

Robert listened with silent amusement to her stories, far more interested in watching the play of the animated features than in what she was saying. After the exterior appearance of the castle had been duly commented upon, they entered the tower.

“See!” said Dida, pointing to several narrow openings in the pavement through which they peered down into unknown darkness, “these were the dungeons.”

“How can that be?” said Robert, laughing; “there seems to be no means of access to them.”

“The prisoners were lowered down by ropes,” replied Dida, a little annoyed that implicit credence was not given to her words; “human bones have been found below.”

“Whose bones? Prisoners of war?”

“No, soldiers who disobeyed orders,” replied Dida, gravely; and after replacing the board that covered the entrance to this unique guardroom, she preceded him up a long, narrow, winding staircase, whence they emerged on a circular platform surrounded by a parapet of moderate height; in the centre stood a wooden bench.

The outer wall of the tower was built on the extreme edge of the precipice, which seen from this point appeared to rise directly out of the river, so that any one looking down for the first time was apt to be visited by a sensation not altogether agreeable—of being in some manner poised in mid-air, and of its being incumbent on him in this new, bird-like character, to make a swoop downwards. At his first glance, Robert drew back hastily with a slight shudder, which deepened into positive terror when he perceived Dida standing on the highest part of the parapet, shading her eyes from the sun, and coolly gazing in the direction of the cottage.

"Come down, Dida! come down!" he shouted, aware the moment the words had passed his lips how perilous it might be to startle her. Dida, however, was not to be startled in this way; she leisurely finished her survey, and then dismounted lightly, saying,

"Father has not returned yet!"

"How can you be so foolhardy?" said Robert, reproachfully.

"There is no danger, Herr Engländer!" she said, laughing; "won't you get up, and see for yourself?"

Robert declined, with a shudder he could not repress, and she continued, "I am obliged to climb there, whenever I want to see if it is time to go home. Franz hangs out a white flag, if he thinks I ought to come back."

"But do they know at home that you indulge in such a practice?"

Dida laughed. "We mountain-folk are not like the rest of the world. When I was a little child—about so high," measuring a yard from the ground,—"it was my ambition to walk round and round the parapet without turning dizzy. But," she added, "you came up here to see the view?"

It was not without a tinge of shame that Robert obeyed the hint, and a consciousness that Dida with her curious, wild ways, was more attractive to him than the finest landscape under the sun.—He must, however, have been far less susceptible than he really was to remain unmoved at the scene which met his gaze. Substantially the same as that which had excited Arnold's enthusiasm on the first night of his arrival in Städtlein, when viewed from the Director's house, it naturally acquired a more expansive character, seen from this elevated standpoint. The windings of the river could be clearly traced for very many miles, now bending and twisting like a serpent amid the hills, now swelling out into a lake studded with islets—contracting again and flowing on through a broad, flat country dotted here and there with towns and villages, until, to the eye, water and sky finally merged into one. Dark forests in the distance, interspersed by silver threads hurrying on to contribute their quota to the grand stream, and by its means to the ocean, formed the back-

ground of the right bank; to the left, a few miles below them, lay the old town of Städtlein, the spires of its countless churches blinking and flashing in the sunlight—its myriads of houses blended by distance into one great whole, teeming with life and animation.

So they stood—those two young people, the English aristocrat and the gipsy-girl—on the old feudal tower; to the one hand the gigantic monument of nineteenth-century, feverish activity—to the other, the mouldering records of those who in like manner had toiled and fretted through their little day, while beneath rolled the great flood, murmuring, in its never-ceasing onwardness—“Men may come, and men may go, but I go on for ever.”

“You seem very fond of the tower?” said Robert, breaking the silence.

“Yes! Here at least one can breathe—down in the valley it is suffocating. If I had but had the luck to be born long ago, when folk had more sense, and did not live in the plain with the beasts of the field!—There were women-soldiers then?” she inquired suddenly.

Robert laughed. “I believe the women took the field occasionally. Are you ambitious to carry a gun?”

“I should not care much what I carried, so that I could fight! I hate this lazy, stay-at-home life.

If I had been a man now, like Franz, I should have been off to the wars long ago."

"You would have made a capital Amazon," said Robert, laughing; "but I fear that a little rebel like you would have had considerable experience of those nice, cool cells we saw just now."

"*Rebel!* Herr Engländer! what do you mean?" said Dida, turning upon him with a passionate flash. "Ah! I see how it is!—that woman I am obliged to call *mother* has been telling you some of her stories about me! *She* may persecute me, force me to work I abhor, poison father's mind, try to set Franz against me, and all for my good, forsooth! and if I breathe a word of complaint, I am a good-for-nothing, thankless girl!—a rebel, as you have just called me."

"Whew!" thought Robert, "what a little fire-brand it is! Your mother has not said anything particular to me," he added aloud, but stopped abruptly on perceiving that Dida was in tears. Here was a climax! Never before had Robert been alone with a girl, pretty and sobbing, and he felt extremely awkward, inasmuch as he could think of nothing better to say than "Poor child! poor Dida! don't think of her, Dida! she is not worth crying about," while he placed her on the bench, and stroked her hand softly, dreading all the while the unexpected appearance of Franz. Tears, however, with this child of Nature, were but a natural sequence to the

foregoing thunderstorm. In a little while, the shower ceased, and a smile broke over her face: "Yes, Herr Engländer!" she said penitently, "I ought not to think so of her, for I might have died but for them—but she aggravates me so! you cannot think how she aggravates me! I have often been on the point of running away back to my own people. If it had not been for father—and Franz," she added, after a pause—"I'd have gone long ago. You will not think badly of me for saying all this, Herr Engländer?" she added anxiously, while a certain look of solicitude lent an unusual softness to the beautiful features. Robert felt a throb of pleasure at being thus appealed to by a creature so charming in all her wilfulness, so different from any one he had ever met before. He hastened to assure her of his entire sympathy, adding, in a tone that was meant to be very fatherly and encouraging, "You need never be afraid to tell me anything, Dida; it will always give me great pleasure to advise you and help you." What advice he gave her on this particular occasion it is difficult to discover, but no doubt she felt it very helpful to sit thus with her hand in his, for she made no effort to withdraw it.

"How tiresome it must be to live in the town!" she said, after a pause.

"How so?" said Robert; "most girls like to see the fine shops, and the gaily-dressed people in the streets."

Dida shrugged her shoulders: "What's the use of looking at things you can never hope to buy?" she said, naïvely. "And as for the gay folk, they only make my old blue gown seem the shabbier. When I go to town, I never pass through the grand streets."

"So you sometimes come down to Städtlein?"

"Oh yes! often, when Franz is busy and father away, I row the market-boat down."

"These slender arms never pulled that heavy boat all those miles?"

Dida smiled: "My arms are not slender, Herr Engländer. Do not the peasant-girls in your country row?"

"I really don't know; I never inquired. But tell me, Dida, do you also row back alone?"

"Certainly! unless it has suddenly grown stormy, then Franz borrows neighbour Hänschen's boat, and comes to fetch me. He is good and kind, is Franz; he would not let the wind blow roughly on me, if he had his way."

"Hang Franz!" ejaculated Robert mentally, adding aloud, "Then I suppose you only come on market-days?"

"Only on Thursdays. Next week I shall have to go, for Franz is so busy."

"And how long does it take you? I cannot do it under two hours and a half."

"I leave here at five in the morning, and get to the town about nine. Then after the folk have

fetches away the vegetables, I go to my aunt's—(she keeps the baker's shop in the market-place)—and rest a while."

A silence ensued, Dida speculating as to the stranger's possible motives for such minute inquiries, Robert making a silent appointment for nine o'clock next Thursday morning at the wharf.

Suddenly they were roused by the sound of voices down below. Dida started.

"They have returned in neighbour Hänschen's boat, and are calling for Franz! Don't move, pray don't move, Herr Engländer! they will see us."

"What if they do?"

"Mother will be furious, and—oh! what am I to do?" she added in distress; "the milk-soup will be burnt! I left it on the fire!"

If all the gold in his purse could suddenly have been melted into milk-soup, Robert would willingly have sacrificed it; but, as no good fairy appeared to their aid, the next best thing that presented itself was to go home with her, and negotiate a peace.

"Don't fret, Dida!" he exclaimed; "I have something to tell the old Frau that will soon put her into good humour."

"Yes," said Dida, ruefully; "but father and Franz will have to go without their supper."

As they rapidly descended the rock, a large white handkerchief waving from a branch warned Dida that trouble was in store for her—a fact proclaimed

also by strange noises proceeding from the cottage. Loud talking, banging of chairs, and knocking about of pots and pans, convinced Dida that her mother had not returned in the best of tempers; and no sooner had she stepped across the threshold than the lifeless articles received a momentary respite from the hard usage to which they had been subjected, while the storm descended on the legitimate head. "Where had she been all day?" the dame wanted to know, "gadding about, and idling her time as usual, no doubt! And the house like a pigstye, and not a drop of hot soup, and the fire as black as a coal! What did it matter to her (Dida) if the father and she dropped down dead, through slaving and working their fingers to the bone, and walking their feet off their legs all day long, to keep up an ungrateful hussy like a fine lady!"

Glad to find that matters were not so bad as she had feared, and that the soup, at least, might yet be eatable, Dida made no reply, but turned to help Franz, who was on his knees before the stove, trying to blow the smouldering embers into a flame, while the flow of Frau Bekker's eloquence came to a premature end as she suddenly perceived Robert, who said with his most insinuating smile, "Come, Frau Bekker, you must scold me, not Dida! It is I who am to blame for the soup not being ready. She was kind enough to open the tower for me, and I fear I have detained her too long."

Who could resist that handsome, merry face, associated as it was with the recollection of the *douceur* of the evening before? Not Frau Bekker! her wrinkles assumed the blindest expression of which they were capable, as she dropped her deepest curtsy, and remarked, in her meekest tone (though unable to resist the temptation of launching a withering glance at the culprit), "I'm sure you're very good, sir, to put in a word for the girl; but I'll be bound she was only too glad of the excuse to waste her time."

"You must hold me answerable for that. I did not want to leave until I had seen *you*, Frau Bekker!"

The dame gave a "hm!" of gratified importance, and smoothed her apron complacently; while Robert informed her that he intended writing to the Baron, and would not fail to mention the tumble-down condition of the cottage, if she could specify exactly what she wanted done to it. This elicited a shoal of complaints and grievances, during which Dida took the opportunity of escaping unobserved; and, as soon as he could get free, Robert followed her, leaving Frau Bekker in a more amiable frame of mind than her husband had had the pleasure of witnessing for months.

"I'll never believe any more stories against foreigners," she murmured; "that young gentleman is a gentleman, and no mistake!—knows a well-dressed shirt when he sees it, and has some con-

sideration for poor folk.—But I wonder what he was talking about to Dida on the tower! I must get it out of her.”

Robert directed his course to the white flag, where he had a dim presentiment Dida might be waiting for him. True enough—there she was, looking very pensive. Dear little thing! was she, perhaps, beginning to feel a touch of that inexplicable feeling which filled his breast towards her? or was the mournful expression only the result of Frau Bekker's harsh words?

“Adieu, Herr Engländer,” she said quietly, the dark eyes completely veiled by the long lashes that swept her cheek. You are going away, and I shall never see you again.”

“I live in the town, Dida!” said Robert significantly. (She looked up quickly.) “Some Thursday, perhaps, we shall see each other.” He had not intended to lead her to expect to see him there, but in some way that pitiful look proved too much for his resolution.

“But you will not speak to me in the town among all those fine folk,” said Dida, looking down at her dress, the momentary flush of joyful surprise fading away.

“What if thou art better to me in thy blue gown, Dida, than all the fine dames in their silks?”

Dida shook her head, and said nothing; but the half-pleased, half-perplexed expression which flitted

across her face showed that she fully comprehended the significance of the change from the formal pronoun to the lover-like "*thou*."

Robert did not leave her long in doubt. "Adieu, little one," he said; "do not let the mother's scolds bring ugly lines on that pretty face," and with a parting kiss (to which the astonished girl made no resistance), he left her.

"He is very bold," thought Dida, as she slowly retraced her steps. "Franz has never kissed me in all these years." But if we might judge from the bright face with which she entered the cottage, Robert's boldness was not displeasing to her.

The young Baronet, meanwhile, rowed down the river with a pleasant conviction that he must be a very generous, warm-hearted fellow, to take so much interest in a peasant-girl. "Dear little thing," he mused (Dida, by the way, was quite as tall as himself); "what a shame it is to see a girl like that thrown away on people who can't appreciate her! But if she were as old and ugly as the witch of Endor," (who was his authority for the personal appearance of the lady in question we do not pretend to know), "I would take her part.—What an old Jezebel the mother is!—That Franz is a fool.—What a manner the little gipsy has, to be sure! I used to think Alice stepped out well; but Dida—is fit to be an empress!"

Robert's concluding reflection was not so dis-

interested as his first might reasonably have led us to expect, but it would certainly have warmed Clayton's heart had he heard it: "Tom is quite right. I shall profit by his experience. A *lady*-wife is of no use to a fellow who is obliged to 'rough it.' Dida is not a common girl—she has a soul above pots and pans, although she knows how to use them; and in the three years I shall easily initiate her into all the little niceties required in 'my lady.'"

CHAPTER XXVII.

A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE SCENES.

AND what, meanwhile, was Lucien's opinion of Arnold's exertions on his behalf? We shall take the novelist's liberty, and look in upon him in his chambers at Wilhelmstadt on the morning when he receives the offer of the Städtlein committee.

It is twelve o'clock on one of those exceptionally bright, warm days in October that incline us to believe the lapse of August and September a dream, out of which we have suddenly wakened to find ourselves still in July. The Grand *Platz* in the centre of the little capital, with the ducal Palace on its north, the Museum opposite, the Barracks on one side, and on the other a row of high white houses with green jalousies, lies basking in the autumn sunshine. Everything seems asleep, from the soldiers drawn up in line, erect, motionless, at the entrance to the Palace quadrangle, awaiting the arrival of their superior officer—to the dogs panting in the shade, too indifferent to make even a snap at the troublesome flies that molest them.—Clearly, such a state of things is an anomaly in October!

So, at least, thinks a mischievous sprite hovering between heaven and earth.

"Whew!" he says, "there's some mistake here! I must give these good folks a taste of what is in store for them!" and whisk! goes the dust whirling and eddying in clouds from one end of the *Platz* to the other—blinding the dogs, changing the bright blue of the uniforms into a whitey-grey, and their automatic wearers into choking, gasping men, cursing the *Dienst*, and longing for one o'clock that they may cleanse their throats with a glass of *Baierisch*.

"Ha!" says the sprite, "I thought I'd wake them up!" and away go the dead leaves spinning along the ground, or sailing in mid-air, while the trees in the promenade receive a hearty shake, which elicits many a groan from the branches already stripped, and many a deprecatory sigh from those still waving in autumn glory.—But there is no immediate occasion for alarm; this is merely a freak on the part of our mischievous friend, who does not feel up to hard work himself to-day, in the face of those mellow sunbeams. He withdraws his forces, and the *Platz* subsides into its normal state—the dogs curl themselves up on the doorsteps again; the leaves flutter calmly in the enjoyment of a new lease of life; and no sound is heard through the sleepy air but the measured tread of the puppets, and the hoarse voice of the officer who pulls the wires that set them in motion.

Surely! never was a place so outrageously, so hopelessly dull, as his Serene Highness's capital of Wilhelmstadt! The quietest little country village might presumably be found more lively, for there, at least, the dairymaids, the ducks, and other denizens of the farmyard, would not amuse themselves by going to sleep all day. But here, with nothing to look out upon but brick and mortar—those staring barracks—that hideous palace-wall! Faugh! it is sickening! To be obliged to spend years in a place so dead-alive, is enough to—to—well! to give one the charming expression at present to be observed on the features of Monsieur Descroix, as he gazes listlessly from a window in the third story of one of the before-mentioned white houses.

What! *this* the brilliant Lucien, whose acquaintance we made on the Weinberg—who proved the very life and soul of the ball that wound up Mala's fête? This gloomy, morose individual, languid, flat as non-effervescing champagne, looking very much as though he would have willingly consigned Humanity in general, and certain members of it in particular, to a place a few degrees hotter than might be altogether agreeable to them?

"Poor fellow!" says a compassionate lady-reader, "can you wonder at the metamorphose? His thoughts are a hundred miles away!"

Indeed! to all appearance they have a much

narrower range, bounded by the wall opposite! But granted that they have travelled the precise distance indicated—that they are, in fact, at Städtlein—do you imagine M. Descroix's peculiarly amiable physiognomy accounted for? Suppose your Arthur had been obliged to join his ship the very day of your betrothal—before either had time to hear half the other had to tell—is it *thus* you would picture him to yourself, pacing the quarter-deck and thinking of you?

If so, you pay yourself a very poor compliment, and one that we would hardly like to consider applicable to our sweet Mala. The image of a true woman, who has promised herself—all she is, all she hopes to be—to a man, never yet produced in him the frame of mind corresponding to Lucien's *blasé* air of discontent. It is not the recollection of Mala that causes him to turn from the window with something between a curse and a groan, and to throw himself into a chair, closing his eyes with the utmost weariness, as though he would fain shut out something that obtrudes itself disagreeably on his notice.

What is it which thus jars upon him?—the disorderly apartment with its velvet couches and *fauteuils* pushed into corners, as if to make room for an impromptu dance—its side-tables covered with empty bottles and glasses—its floor strewn with withered flowers and cigar-ash? Or the sight of

the closed piano, with that symphony of Gade which the Grand Duke expects to hear at the two o'clock Rehearsal, and which he has not yet looked into?

A servant entered with a tray on which were a bottle of maraschino and a single, cup of strong, black coffee.

Lucien opened his eyes: "How is it that the room is in confusion, Karl?" he inquired peevishly.

"The gentlemen did not leave before six o'clock, Herr Kapellmeister," returned Karl, as he set down the tray.

"What has that to do with it?"

"You have been asleep, on the sofa, ever since, and I did not like to disturb you."

"Have I not told you hundreds of times not to mind that, you blockhead? Make haste now, the Duke may call at any moment! You know very well he is to be at the Rehearsal to-day. Give me that music there, on the piano."

In handing the score to his master, Karl let it fall—several letters dropped from between the leaves.

"When did these come?" Lucien inquired hastily.

"The other day, sir, as you were going out with the Herr Baron."

Lucien recollected the circumstance—the horses were at the door, he had thrown the letters on the piano without examining them, and the matter had passed entirely from his memory. Something like

a flush of shame mounted to his brow as he recognised Mala's handwriting: "Little dove!" he thought, "what would she say, if she suspected that a letter of hers had remained two days unopened! I dare say she knows mine by heart an hour after their arrival. One from my uncle too! and an official-looking document as well! What can they be about? There, Karl, never mind the dusting!" he added aloud, and, waiting impatiently until the man had left the room, broke the seal of Mala's note, and read as follows:—

"My dearest! my dearest! How soon we shall be together again! The news papa has just told me I can hardly realize; it seems like a dream. But I *must* write. I would not have you think that I alone of all the world am indifferent to your good fortune. Do not think me selfish, dear Lucien! but had you been called far away, like Wallraf, I could not have rejoiced at it—I could not have borne it; it would have been *bad* fortune to me. Now I can think of nothing but that you will return; that you will never again leave me. Write to me, Lucien! Tell me that this is also the greatest bliss to you, to be once more with—your

"MALA."

A presentiment of what had occurred flashed across Lucien's mind, as he tore open the Director's letter:

"Dear Nephew!

"No doubt you have already received the offer

of the Committee of the Conservatorium regarding the post so long filled by Wallraf; therefore I need say nothing about it, except that such a chance seldom falls in the way of so young a man. Of course, you will accept it? Wallraf starts immediately for St. Petersburg, and as Müller and I divide his work between us in the meantime, you will see the necessity of making some arrangement with his Highness that shall set you free as soon as possible. Should your movements be hampered for want of money, do not hesitate to apply to me, as nothing must prevent your coming to us without delay. Mala is writing—so I shall say no more.

“GOTTLÖB BERGMANN.”

“Curt and cool! no love lost between *us*!” was Lucien’s comment as he turned to the portly official document, and having disentangled its web of cumbrous phrases and polite circumlocutions, arrived at the gist of the matter, and satisfied himself that the most worthy and honourable Committee really had placed within his reach this stepping-stone to fortune.

Never had unexpected intelligence arrived so opportunely! thought Lucien; as he leant back in his chair, coffee-cup in hand, the morose cloud replaced by a beam of satisfaction and gratified vanity.—At length the world was beginning to wake up to his merits—late enough too! after leaving him to stagnate eighteen long months in a place like

Wilhelmstadt. Wallraf was not such a fool after all, as to use his influence for a fellow with so little dash as Müller; although there *had* been some talk about it. It would serve the Grand Duke right to leave him in the lurch; he had been getting very exacting, and far too dictatorial of late! Too little time bestowed on the Rehearsals, indeed! What did he, an amateur, know about the matter? And Retschl's bill due to-day; perhaps he would renew it now, or, if not, his uncle's offer would extricate him from an unpleasant dilemma.

By Jove! what a pretty state of things he had opened his eyes upon that morning! Every fraction of the current half-year's salary lost the preceding evening to those fellows! they had the devil's own luck. How came he to be so deucedly unfortunate? One might imagine the Old Gentleman was determined to pay him out, for his intention of deserting the ranks! He would have to give up all this sort of thing when he got to Städtlein—with his lynx-eyed uncle and his spies always on his track. He must begin at once to put himself in training for it—pull the professorial face, let his hair grow, shudder at the name of Offenbach, swear by Beethoven, and escort aunt Martha to church every Sunday! Well, notwithstanding these drawbacks, anything to get away from the monotony of Wilhelmstadt! and Mala would make up for a good deal. What a sweet little dove it was—with those soft melting eyes! how

they got round a fellow's heart! Still, it was almost a pity she was quite so fond of him, it tied him down so desperately. (Here Lucien fell into a study so brown—or, rather, black—that it is with difficulty we can follow the thread of his reflections.)

After all, why should he be obliged to play the hypocrite? Neither Mala nor his uncle had been the means of getting him this piece of preferment; it was entirely owing to his own deserts (in this, as we know, he was slightly mistaken). If he had not been in such a confounded hurry to secure Mala, he might have been free now, and perhaps done a great deal better in the matrimonial market. He could not endure people who held their heads so high, and were so strait-laced in their notions, as his uncle. Anybody would have thought that the Director was of the blood-royal, and he (Lucien) a miserable beggar, that evening he proposed for Mala! The cool way in which his uncle heard all he had to say, and then laid down the law as to what he was to do, and to promise, before he could possibly hope for the inestimable privilege of becoming his son-in-law! Much as he was in love with Mala (and he always *was* head-over-ears when beside the little puss!) if he had known that this offer was in store for him, he would have thrown the Director's conditions back in his face.

Lucien rose and paced the room: "Beware of gambling!" he said aloud, mimicking his uncle's

earnest manner. "I got out of that pretty well by asking him point-blank if he had ever seen me at the billiard-table. Of course he hadn't; but 'my father's tendency!' Well, I don't deny that I've a spice of my father's devilry in me. But, as I assured him, he need not alarm himself about that; for, by his own account, there was as much saintliness in my mother as might have sufficed for a score, and I suppose I have inherited her '*tendencies*' too, to counterbalance the other," (this was an assumption on M. Descroix's part hardly borne out by facts.) "Oh, I had him nicely there! Well, well, I suppose I must keep up this game for a time. With his asthma he can't last long, and the Directorship, and that snug little sum at Braun's, won't be a bad thing to step into, although there *is* a condition attached in the shape of Mala. There's no denying that it might have been worse! What a lovely creature she is, to be sure, and how she looks up to me! If it were not for this cursed debt, I'd take her to-morrow without a penny!" and Lucien swelled with conscious magnanimity. "Let me see what she says again: 'Write and tell me that the greatest bliss is to be near your Mala.' Innocent little soul, it certainly will be very pleasant, if not the greatest happiness on earth, to have you for my own—Mala."

Here Lucien's reflections were cut short by the appearance of the Grand Duke, all impatience for

the new Symphony, and we leave him to make his excuses as best he may.

This short soliloquy will have given the reader a little insight into Descroix's character. If the view thus gained be not altogether an agreeable one, it will at least go to prove that the Alte was not so nearly in his dotage as Arnold imagined; while it may perhaps afford a clue to events in our story which might otherwise seem somewhat perplexing.

Book the Sixth.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CARNIVAL.

FASTNACHT is at hand. For several weeks the shops have been filled with masks, and fancy-dresses; and the hotel books have noted an influx of visitors preparatory to the annual Saturnalia of the three days immediately preceding Lent, during which the inhabitants of the usually sober and sedate town of Städtlein—from the Bürgermeister downwards—go mad *en masse*.

This year, it is whispered, the cortège of maskers will be exceptionally brilliant; for the effect of the last two festivals having been marred by the weather (a German February rivalling in capriciousness its English brother), a blue sky and bright sun may be confidently anticipated, since never, within the recollection of the oldest citizen, have there been *three* rainy Carnivals in succession. All is, therefore, joyful expectation.

The Committee of Management numbers among its members scions of most of the best families; and from the rumours that fly about regarding the fabulous sums placed at its disposal, and the pains

bestowed on the exhumation of the quaintest, and adoption of the newest, devices, public curiosity is roused to the highest pitch. Far-away country cousins, who usually come to town once in seven years, make this the occasion of an extraordinary visit; and, consequently, windows along the route which the procession is expected to take are eagerly competed for at unheard-of prices.

As yet, it must be confessed, the weather does no credit to the prophesiers of smooth things; sudden and violent hailstorms alternate with a small drizzling rain that fills the air with a steaming moisture, and the interstices between the paving-stones with an inky fluid, into which the unwary foot-passenger plunges ankle-deep. All this, however, is to cease with the Monday, and meantime there is enough to do, and to see, to drive away any dismal forebodings.

Crowds of children surround the *Conditors'* shops, surveying with eager looks the wondrous *Fastnacht*-cakes, those triumphs of the sugar-bakers' art, whereon the prettiest little Columbines in the world, all pink and white, embrace the jauntiest parti-coloured Harlequins, both balancing themselves on one leg meantime, while ugly, squinting gnomes, with pitch-black bodies and red eyes, scowl maliciously on the happiness of the lovers. And the best (or the worst) of it is, that all this exists not merely to be looked at—another pleasure remains

behind for those who are lucky enough to own the purse of Cresus. Many are the watering eyes and mouths that turn away disconsolately from the tempting corner, to stifle desire in objects not quite so suggestive.

Look, where they will, however, individuals of a covetous temperament—children of whatever age—cannot fail to experience considerable aggravation at the sight of the dainties heaped up on all sides, as though Städtlein were about to undergo a protracted siege, and every available article of food had been hurriedly brought within the walls. The yards, we might say miles, of sausages elegantly hung in festoons, the cart-loads of cabbages, barrels of red herring, mountains of eggs, the golden oranges smiling through their tissue wrappers, the aromatic coffee, the sparkling sugar, and, most delicious of all, the fragrant lemons and pungent spice; why, the very odour of the Bowl itself is wafted from the grocer's *magasin*.

And why all this superabundance? For a reason, gentle reader, which to the initiated lies on the surface. By an ancient law in the code of the Lord of Misrule it is enacted that, during his sway, "any one shall be at liberty to procure unto himself as much bread and wine as his body shall require for its sustenance, by requesting it at the hand of a dealer in the same, *provided he can make good his entrance into the magazine of the said dealer.*" Thus,

you see, unless one would feed all the rogues and vagabonds in the town, barred doors and closed windows are a necessity of Carnival time, and the bountiful stores we have been contemplating are made with a view to enable the good *hausfrau* to lay in her supply against the season of dearth and disorder.

But these grosser elements are not the only attractions offered just now by the miry, murky streets. You and I, reader, willingly pass on : give a glance at the glittering bijouterie and elegant trifles in the shape of *Fastnacht* gifts ; smile at the massive brooches with "real" diamonds the size of nuts, which will remain to many a peasant-girl as a tangible record of the great Carnival of 18— ; and then pause to wonder at the *chefs d'œuvre* of chocolate in the confectioner's window, wherein that plastic material appears in all forms, from an elaborate model of the town-hall to one somewhat more homely of the kitchen-stove—from the bust of some great man with classic features, folded arms and meditative air (sagely suspected by the children to be that of the proprietor of this mysterious emporium) to a grinning, woolly-headed image of Topsy.

But the masks ! the masks ! After all, everything yields in interest to them. Time would fail us, did we attempt to describe the varied selection open to every purchaser, from the artistic wardrobes in the High Street whence he of the long purse may

emerge in the silver cloth and refulgent wings of the angel Gabriel, or the scarlet hose and red-tipped plume of Mephisto himself, according as his fancy may dictate—to the open-air stalls in the back streets kept by the vendors of tarts and bulls'-eyes, commodities now outweighed in the scale of public estimation by grotesque plaster-casts, which enable the *gamin* at the expense of a few *groschen* to indulge in the luxury of goggle-eyes, a carbuncled nose, a protruding tongue, or any other of the little embellishments popularly believed amongst the same race in England to have been peculiar to Guy Fawkes.

Nor is the excitement confined to the younger members of the family. The father has to provide for the concoction of the solemn *bole* ; and the mother, poor thing ! between superintending the preparation of the Carnival soup (that mellow *fleischsuppe* with its floating balls, the recipe for which mysteriously disappears during fifty-one weeks out of the fifty-two), and making with her own hands the wafer-like *nutzen* and *wappeln*, and the crisp, nut-shaped *mändelchen* (all of which, be it known to the English reader, are cakes manufactured only at this season), has little rest or sleep for days before the feast.

Aunt Martha, we may be sure, is in her glory. A *Städtleiner* born and bred, she would be horrified did she discover a single house where the appropriate

dainties were lacking, and deeply has the pitiful ignorance of all Carnival usages displayed by Madame Müller touched her housewifely heart.

Arnold is no longer a member of the Director's family; he lives in Wallraf's old abode, and his mother keeps house for him; but Fräulein Martha is determined that he shall not go without the cakes he liked so much last year, and she sets to work vigorously to manufacture for both families. But, alas! the greatness of the task is so overpowering, that aunt Martha's memory deserts her, or rather leads her such a dance that she forgets one half of the ingredients, and mistakes the proportions of the other half. Fortunately for the consumers, Mala learns, on her return from a walk, that the undertaking has commenced, and pops her head into the kitchen.

"How are you getting on, auntie? I do wish you would let me help!"

"Help! what can a young thing like you help in, but the eating?" says aunt Martha, in the conscious importance of a very red face and a very large white apron and bib. "There is one ready in the pan—try that! Is it good?"

When the cake has been reduced to a *minimum* of heat, Mala cautiously ventures upon a corner, knowing by experience the danger of rushing headlong upon any new venture of aunt Martha, who watches the process with great anxiety, and as Mala

pulls a wry face, exclaims in alarm, "What's the matter?"

"Why, auntie! it's as hard as a brickbat!"

"Bless me!" cries the aunt, dropping the rolling-pin, "I quite forgot the butter, *and* the spice—and, oh dear me! what *has* got into the flour?"

With a sudden explosion, which she smothers by stuffing her apron into her mouth, cook beats a hasty retreat into an adjoining passage, whence subdued bursts are distinctly audible as she relates the mishap for the benefit of a fellow-servant, for cook is not one to appreciate any interference in her department.

Fräulein Martha draws herself up and looks dignified. "That woman does not know her own place!" she observes to Mala, who shuts the door, and begs again to be allowed to help: "You know, auntie, next year I shall be making *mändelchen* in my own house!"

This little hint, accompanied by the prettiest blush in the world, is too much for aunt Martha, who cannot refrain from giving her darling a floury hug that modifies the shade of her darling's dress considerably; after which they both set amicably to work, the result of their combined labour being—in spite of cook's prognostications—a complete success.

For many successive years there had been placed at the Director's disposal, two windows on the first floor of a house in one of the principal streets

through which the procession passed ; the proprietor seeking in this way to display his sense of what he owed to Herr Bergmann, who had laid the foundation of his present prosperity by assisting him, when, a poverty-stricken, struggling Italian, he had commenced business in Germany as a piano-tuner and vendor of violin-strings. Now, a flourishing music-seller, he was proud to do the honours of his house and of the show annually to his former benefactor and his beautiful daughter, and some of Mala's pleasantest childish reminiscences were connected with the swarthy, black-haired foreigner and his corpulent lady. This year, these windows promised to be well filled, for not only was the Director's family expected, but Madame Müller, Lili, Arnold, and Robert had also been invited to join the party.

Aunt Martha, of course, was going, as excited and pleased as if it had been her *first* instead of her *fortieth* Carnival ; but the Director laughingly begged himself off. He had always done duty gallantly towards the ladies, he said, so long as it was necessary, but now that there were so many young men to dance attendance, a patriarch like him might be excused for preferring to stay at home and smoke his cigar in peace.

However, when they met on the Sunday evening to discuss the final arrangements for the next day, it was found that the escort had dwindled down to

one cavalier—Arnold, namely. Robert pleaded a prior engagement, and Lucien announced, that, owing to an unexpected pressure of work, he would not be able to do more than accompany the ladies to their places, and return in the afternoon to fetch them. This declaration threw cold water over the enjoyment of the whole party, for Mala resolved, with tears in her eyes, to stay at home also—"she did not care for the Carnival without Lucien." Herr Bergmann looked excessively annoyed, and Arnold offered his assistance with the work in question.

"Thank you!" replied Lucien, stiffly; "it is an affair to which I alone can attend."

"Lucien! I must say that I don't understand you!" burst forth the Director, in a tone more vehement than he had ever been heard to use before, as he struck the table angrily. "You neither work nor take pleasure in a legitimate way, like other people. When I was your age, I worked as hard as most young men, and did it with a will, too; but I should as soon have thought of flying as of remaining chained to my desk during Carnival. You *cannot* work, even if you wish. The procession will pass directly underneath your windows, and with that hooting and uproar, it is folly to talk of study."

This outburst on the part of Herr Bergmann, as rare as it was violent, startled the little circle. Arnold wished himself a hundred miles away,—the Alte suddenly woke up and looked lively, in evident

enjoyment of the scene,—aunt Martha dropped her stitches faster than she made them,—Mala trembled visibly, and looked imploringly at Lucien (who stood beating an impatient tattoo on the window-pane), as though deprecating a hasty retort.

“What can you possibly have to do?” began the Director again. “Look at Arnold here,—you don’t pretend that you work harder than he does? His classes are twice as large as yours; he writes more than you; he gives me a great deal of assistance; and yet, you see, he can afford to let his friends have a little of his society.”

Lucien turned suddenly, and said, with an effort at self-control, outmastered by the compressed lip and scornful eye, “You forget, *mon oncle*, that I am no longer a school-boy to be dictated to in this way! Is it not enough that I tell you, unexpected work prevents my being present to-morrow?”

“No!” said the Director, shortly, “it is *not* enough.”

Like a whirlwind, Lucien burst from the room and rushed downstairs, followed by Mala, who exclaimed in an agony: “Oh, papa, papa, what have you done?”

“What have I done?” echoed Herr Bergmann, testily,—“told a puppy a bit of my mind!”

“Quite right, Gottlob! quite right!” assented the Alte. “*Work*, indeed! Depend upon it, he is about some masquerading nonsense;” but the Director

seemed ill at ease, and, after a little, he got up and left the room.

Mala, meanwhile, had overtaken her cousin as he was on the point of opening the street-door, and detaining him with an earnestness to which her terror lent strength, exclaimed:—

“Dear Lucien, you will not go thus, without a word?”

He attempted to shake her off, regardless of her beseeching glance, with a rough “You know I hate scenes, Mala!” when a loud knock at the door, the handle of which he held in his grasp, caused him to abandon his resolution, and suffer her to lead him into an adjoining ante-room.

• “Do not be vexed with papa, Lucien! you know how very seldom he is hasty,” Mala pleaded, as she stood by the chair into which he had moodily flung himself; “you ought not to be angry.”

“But I *am* angry,” he retorted, with a violence that caused her involuntarily to start. “Do you imagine, Mala, that a man like me can tamely submit to be insulted in this way?—to be given the lie direct?”

“You must have misunderstood papa, Lucien. I am sure he did not mean to disbelieve you. It is only because he wishes that I should be happy to-morrow.—It is all my fault,” added Mala, anxious, after the usual fashion of women, to divert the blow from its intended object to her own shoulders.

"Adieu, Mala," he continued, in the tone of conscious rectitude; "I will write your father this evening."

"Nay, Lucien, don't let us part thus!" said Mala, laying her hand on his arm.

"Better to part at once, if it is to be done at all."

"But why will you leave me, Lucien?"

"Why do you send me away, Mala?"

"Ah, Lucien! you know that I only care to live that I may be with you," said Mala, reproachfully; "but you—you no longer care for me."

"What nonsensical ideas get into that little head," said Lucien, drawing her to him; "I assure you, Mala, on my honour! all I said had reference to my uncle. As for us two, we are one; we understand each other."

"So I thought, until to-day," said Mala, and was silent.

"Come, come! I won't have my little dove looking so—not for ten thousand papas! Cheer up, Mala, smile again, and I'll give in to my uncle, and take care of you to-morrow."

Notwithstanding this magnanimous promise, it was some time before M. Descroix could undo the effects of his rashness, and restore Mala's trusting confidence. What arguments he used—how he pictured himself, bereft of her, the most miserable of men—how the little, tender heart fluttered, relented, and finally melted into a flood of contrition for its own

hardness, needs not to be described. That Lucien finally succeeded in knitting more firmly than ever the bonds that linked her to himself, no one will doubt who knows anything of a gentle, loving, girlish nature. The cloud blew over, leaving Mala with a dim consciousness that she alone was to blame for its having appeared on the horizon at all, and with an overwhelming sense of Lucien's generosity and self-sacrifice in consenting to accompany her on the morrow, after what had occurred.

Thus tranquillity was restored. Lucien's concession pacified the Director, who was not without sundry misgivings that he had been, after all, a little unreasonable; and although the Alte muttered audibly several times during the evening, "Press of work, forsooth! moonshine!" nothing further happened to break the harmony of the circle; and Lucien was so lover-like and so devoted to Mala, that her happiness knew no bounds.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE STREETS.

THE next morning dawned—alas ! for the expectant thousands—cold and wet. A drenching rain, which poured without intermission the whole day, completely frustrated any attempt at a procession ; and baffled sightseers went to bed with expectation fixed all the more firmly on the morrow. Tuesday did not altogether disappoint their hopes, for though the clouds hung low and threatening, a brisk wind bade fair to drive them to the hills, and the sun shone out cheerily at intervals.

By seven o'clock the streets were alive with country-folk hurrying, as if for bare life, to secure for themselves the most eligible positions along the line of march. Some few monopolized the steps of houses and churches, to the great inconvenience of those within, whose means of egress were thus impeded. Others, not so fortunate, stood huddled together on the pavement, submitting patiently to be splashed from head to foot, as carriage after carriage rolled past for the short time in which vehicles were permitted ; and amusing themselves by

watching the progress of the decorations, which had all been removed by the prudent citizens during Monday's rain. By nine o'clock, who could have recognised the hoary old town of Städtlein in her festal garb?—the sombre grey of her walls hidden behind the brightest of scarlet draperies, her balconies transformed into evergreen bowers, her chimneys concealed by gay extempore arches and floating banners, each bearing a design emblematic of some bygone civic triumph.

The amazement of a stranger suddenly deposited in the High Street, without previous knowledge of the circumstances, may be easily imagined.—On one side he would be jostled by an old woman nearly six feet high, wearing a mob-cap and a tremendous beard; on the other by a knight of the Middle Ages, his limbs and body encased in armour, his head covered by a fashionable French hat. Here he would see an overgrown school-boy, weighing probably some twenty-five stones, in a blouse, with satchel and slate by his side; there one Polichinello, bestriding the shoulders of another. Now he would be made the subject of some witty remark by Mr. Clown; again, he would be importuned to buy a rusty kettle, or an infallible remedy for the gout, by a travelling-packman. From every quarter his ears would be assailed by the most hideous and uncouth sounds,—braying of trumpets, beating of drums, grinding of hand-organs, squeaking of tin-whistles.

Our unlucky traveller would certainly hesitate between two conclusions—either that the Städtlein world was mad, or that he himself had lost his senses, and preferring the former alternative, would leave the town more quickly than he had entered it.

Ten o'clock came, and the windows and balconies on either side received their complement of beauty. Fair young girls occupied the front seats, behind each her attendant squire, disguised in a black domino; eager, curly-haired sprites danced restlessly backwards and forwards between the window and the interior of the room, chattering incessantly, and teasing long-suffering parents with inquiries as to when the show would commence; while in the background might be seen the snowy head of grandpapa, and grandmamma in her most elaborate cap, smiling benignly on the excitement of the young people, and calling to mind the memorable Carnival of 17——, when they, too, had sat in the front row, and examined, with beating hearts, the mottoes wrapped round the *ben-bons* thrown in by the maskers.

Probably no window held a prettier group, or received more glances of admiration, than that where sat the party with whom we are to see the show—Mala in a blue dress, whose bright tints enhanced the exquisite fairness of her complexion, the soft fur of a mantle thrown around her by the prudent care of aunt Martha encircling her delicate throat, her sweet face lit up with the consciousness of supreme

happiness. Behind her Lucien and Arnold, tall, athletic, with features concealed by the sable mask, through which the eyes looked out keen and startling; both young men of whom a mother might be proud—so, at least, thought Madame Müller, as she surveyed the three from her quiet corner. Her eye travelled from Mala to Arnold, and from Arnold back again to Mala, and she trembled for his peace. Unnecessarily! with Arnold the battle was fought and won.

At the second window sat aunt Martha, her kindly face beaming with pleasure at the unequivocally expressed delight of the country-bred Lili, who clapped her hands and capered with glee as each successive monstrosity caught her eye. For some time the third window remained unoccupied, and the young people amused themselves by conjecturing for whom it was reserved. The question was solved at length by the entrance of their host, ushering in his illustrious compatriots, Signor and Signora Eschino—the lady all portliness, sallowness, loud-voicedness, and black ringlets, as usual, but radiant in a gorgeous yellow satin, dotted over with huge black pines; the gentleman all meekness, timidity, and baldness, nervously twirling his hat between his finger and thumb, as though determined to adapt it to carnival-mode by divesting it of brim. None of our friends were particularly enchanted at this addition to the party, except, perhaps, Lucien, who appeared im-

mensely tickled at something known only to himself, and whispered to Mala, "Capital! I would not have missed this for a hundred thalers!"

Mala had no time to inquire what it was that afforded him so much amusement, for she was immediately pounced upon by the strong-minded lady, who seemed determined to improve the opportunity.

And how was the darling Signorina? No need to ask the question, however,—blooming as a rosebud. And the worthy Herr Director? He was not with them to-day; might she be permitted to know the reason? Ah! business, business (with a solemn shake of the black ringlets)—what a man he was to be sure! and what an advantage for Mademoiselle, with her voice, to have such a father!—Never could the Signora forget the exquisite pleasure she had enjoyed the evening of the Famine-Concert, in hearing Mademoiselle sing. What a compass! What purity of intonation!—No, no, she used no flatteration. Of course, the Fräulein was young then, she must have improved greatly since. Did she not think of entering the Conservatorium? The Signora would be ravished to do her little best for the cultivation of so magnificent an organ.

Poor Mala, who shrank from the energetic caresses and "flatteration" of the Signora, much as a fawn might do from the playful gambols of a boz-constrictor, exerted herself to answer all inquiries and dismiss her tormentor. In vain. The Signora had

taken possession of her, as well as of Madame Müller's place, that lady having risen for a moment as they arrived to look to the safety of Lili. Mala glanced imploringly at Arnold, who took the hint, and said, with the utmost suavity, when his mother returned, "Will you allow me to offer you a chair, madame? That is my mother's place."

The Signora's voluble flow ceased for an instant, and the ringlets shook with indignation as she answered: "I wish to remain here. The place was vacant when I entered. I do not sit upon a chair when an ottoman is in the room," and resumed her attack upon Mala, who, blushing scarlet at the slight thus put upon gentle Madame Müller by one who acted as if on intimate terms with herself, rose and offered her place to the widow.

"By no means, my dear," said the latter, her quiet face betraying no sign of anger beyond a slight flush. "I shall do very well with Lili."

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Lucien, audibly, "two can play at that game!" and before the Signora had time to anticipate them, Madame Müller was ensconced in a comfortable corner of the vacant window, with an empty chair by her side, occupied in a few minutes, on some slight pretext, by Mala. And thus the Signora found herself alone in her glory—in solitary possession of the ottoman, which was shared during the remainder of the day only by her husband; and he, poor little man (knowing full

well that he counted for nothing, or considerably less than nothing, in his wife's estimation), did not venture to intrude himself upon it further than the edge, where he sat submissively smiling, shivering, and acquiescing in all she had to say.

This disagreeable incident had diverted the attention of our friends from what was passing outside; and on peace being restored, they were vexed to perceive that the aspect of affairs had totally changed; the rain, so long threatening, now descended in a continuous torrent. Nothing was to be seen but a far-stretching canopy of whalebone and gingham—somewhat unequal in height, it is true, since every individual upheld his own portion, but yet so compact, that an enterprising cat might have traversed at his leisure the whole length of the street, without once soiling his paws in the mire. Underneath, the throng of warriors, peasants, and shepherdesses, took refuge, while the fickle element kept up a perpetual drip, drip, drip! trickling down between the skin and the outer garment of such as had the misfortune to be a few inches shorter than their brethren on either side, and mingling the brilliant red and white of clown and pantaloon into a nondescript purple. Nevertheless, the utmost good humour prevailed, and although the jokes became few and fewer, not a discontented face was visible; those who seemed the most exposed munched apples and crunched *Mandelchen* with a stoicism worthy of a better cause.

The Signora was loud in her abuse of German weather and German drollery.—Call *this* a Carnival! with black clouds overhead, pouring down water by the bucket-full, and a wind sharp enough to set one's teeth on edge. And those pudding-headed sausages there in the gutter, what a travestie of Italian humour! No *esprit*. No *espièglerie*. Hans was all very well so long as he kept to his trade; but—Sant' Antonio! with neither Roman grace nor Parisian *chic*—what right had he to attempt a Carnival!—And the Signora launched forth into extravagant recollections of bygone Carnivals held under the sunny skies, amid the balmy breezes of her beloved Italia, until the little Lili, who had listened with open mouth and wondering eyes, asked her mother, why the lady had ever left Italia, since she was so happy there?

“Bravo, little one,” cried Lucien, in a mischievous whisper; “present our united compliments to Madame, and tell her we are all anxious for an answer to that question!” an embassy on which Lili was not suffered to depart.

Removed from the baleful influence of the black ringlets, Mala soon recovered her spirits, and the merry voices and joyous bursts of laughter from the opposition-window, caused by degrees such an increase of acerbity in the Signora's temper, that her victim glanced several times in the direction of the door, as though meditating an impromptu flight.

waggon with framework so ingeniously covered and adorned with flowers, that it seemed at first sight as though a brilliant parterre had suddenly acquired the power of locomotion, and arrived, suspended in mid-air, a gift of Flora to the Festival.

A company of soldiers, era *Louis Quatorze* (stage-style), cocked-hatted, gold-laced, bewigged, and bepowdered.

A huge cage filled with apes—grinning, chattering, and making love in a suspiciously human manner to the ladies on either side.

Another pause, filled up in the way described.

A large vessel manned by several individuals in the loose blue shirt, immense collar, and correspondingly wide trousers of the jolly, red-nosed British tar (*alla Tedesca*), who illustrated the dangers of a nautical career by furling and unfurling a tattered sail, supposed to have surmounted the battle and the breeze; and its duties, by going through a naval hornpipe. This device, perfectly new to the *Städtleiners*, elicited great laughter and applause, though aunt Martha was heard to regret with a sigh that Robert was not by her side to explain it to her.

By way of contrast to John-Bullism, there followed immediately after a squadron of the *Cuirassiers* stationed in the town, who were greeted with a loud "Hurrah!"—as fine a set of men as ever rejoiced the eyes of the Great Fritz—in white uniforms and glittering helmets, preceded by their own

band. The very horses they bestrode seemed to know intuitively that they were mounted by the Flower of the army, and pawed the ground with a dignity which communicated itself comically enough to the crowd of maskers who marched in their wake with martial bearing and heads thrown back (regardless of wigs and false noses), keeping step to the inspiriting strain as rigorously as though they had been on parade with Sergeant Argus on the look-out. Truly, with the Städtleiners, the soldierly instinct is inborn !

The rain had now ceased, and the bright sunshine which succeeded infused new life into the proceedings.

The next arrival caused considerable amusement. It was a handsome private carriage, containing three individuals, each of whom owned two sets of features, one legitimate—the other in the place where the hair ought to grow; and otherwise attired in such a way as to render it almost impossible to detect which was back, and which front. This vehicle stopped for a moment below our friends' window, and one of the maskers, after saluting Mala with a shower of *bon-bons*, pointed to the vacant place by his side, and called out a few words which sounded from beneath the disguise very like, "Shabby fellow, Descroix ! we'll be quits with you for this !"

"Do you know these gentlemen ?" said Mala in surprise.

"Yes, they are three of the officers stationed here," growled Lucien, with the addition, "What asses they are making of themselves!" but he did not seem quite at his ease until they had passed on. Was he afraid that through some unforeseen *contretemps* the existence of a fourth double-fronted costume, at present in his possession, might ooze out? After all, reader, the Alte may be a more wide-awake old gentleman than we imagine!

A band of hunters clad in sylvan green, their steeple-crowned hats surrounded by wreaths of vine-leaves, now made their appearance, tramping through the mire in daintily-rosetted shoes, each leading by the hand a peasant-girl in the picturesque costume of the Black Forest.

Next followed a gorgeously-gilt equipage, containing the Sultan and his Harem, the former, strangely forgetful alike of his dignity and of his fair ones, dancing, capering, and kissing his hand to acquaintances on either side.

Close behind rode Don Quixote, lankier than ever, on a miserable hack, which had evidently been put for some time past on the diet of Rocinante; at his heels, of course, Sancho Panza on his ass—the merriest, jolliest, brownest little comrades ever beheld.

Another carriage, inscribed *Dilettante-Concert*, held four ancient ladies, all rouge and crinoline, declaiming at the top of their quavering voices the most

elaborate of operatic 'scenas, with trills, tremoli, and turns after the most approved fashion of *prime donne*. These ladies were supported by a numerous orchestra in parti-coloured garments, who produced the most dismal effect imaginable, each member playing only such concord or discord as seemed good unto himself. The whole affair was a squib on an amateur performance lately given in the town, which had fallen below even the broad level afforded to such entertainments; and was received by all, except those immediately concerned, with shouts of laughter. Madame Eschino (who had been mainly responsible for the failure by her absurd selection of pieces) was violent in her denunciation of the travesty: it was disgraceful, scandalous! Were *she* the Bürgermeister, she would have all those insolent creatures taken to the town gaol.

A circumstance which, perhaps, added fuel to the Signora's wrath, was the fact, that one of the vocalizing grandmothers boasted a crop of black ringlets and a profile strikingly suggestive of her own; nor did her vexation decrease when she perceived that under the quizzical guidance of Lucien (whom she suspected, not without reason, of being the originator of the scheme), the joke might soon be patent to the whole party.

It is but fair to say, however, that notwithstanding M. Descroix's efforts to provide amusement for himself by getting up a scene, the Signora so far

retained self-control as to deprive him of that gratification. This phenomenon may be partly accounted for by the behaviour of those present—not one of whom (Lucien excepted) betrayed the slightest consciousness of the caricature—since, whatever might be the general feeling towards her, there was but one opinion as to the propriety of making her a public laughing-stock, and therefore M. Descroix's witticisms fell rather flat. But if we would discover the real secret of the Signora's calmness, we must seek it in the supposed mainspring of all feminine action—curiosity.

Herr von Holz from Dörfchen, together with his brother-artists, had organized a select Costume-ball for that evening, for which only a comparatively few tickets had been issued, and these only to a favoured number. The Signora had not been included among these lucky individuals, and the desire to learn all that could be known of the intended proceedings overcame anger and every other consideration. For some time past she had been angling for Lili (who, of course, must have heard a great deal), baiting her hook with *bonbons*, and glances intended to be equally sweet. But hitherto the child, repelled by the lady's harsh voice and bold stare, could not be persuaded to leave her perch on Fräulein Martha's knee. Madame Müller now came unconsciously to the rescue. Her short-lived annoyance entirely banished by the episode of the

dilettante concert, she began to feel pity for the Italian's loneliness, and summoning Lili, bade her offer some cakes to the Signora and remain with her a short time. Lili looked up in surprise, but reading confirmation in her mother's glance, did as she was told.

Now it so happened, that the Signora had on her arm a magnificent bracelet—a rare Mosaic representing the Madonna and Child, set in a broad band of gold, studded by rubies and diamonds. This ornament, as unlike its wearer as anything can well be imagined, flashed and sparkled in its coruscated light after a fashion calculated to attract the attention of connoisseurs much more profound than Lili, who now stood, cake-basket in hand, fascinated by the glittering toy.

The Signora saw her advantage, and slipping the armlet off, held it before her wondering gaze, and tapped her yellow satin folds, saying: "Come up here, and you shall see the Holy Mother!"

Lili, brought up in Protestantism, knew nothing about the Holy Mother, but neither her six-year-old wisdom, nor her intuitive dislike to the black ringlets, was proof against the temptation, and she quietly submitted to be hoisted on to Madame's ample lap, where she amused herself by fastening the bracelet on her own chubby arm, while its owner (although trembling for its safety) drew out of her, with the sweetest of words and caresses, all

that she knew concerning the ball—if mamma and Arnold were going—what Mala was to wear; and other similar items of intelligence.

The motley train meantime continued its progress, its ranks now swelled by many adherents hitherto distrustful of the weather. Private carriages filled with maskers of all ranks and ages in every conceivable disguise; menageries of curious animals hardly known to naturalists; conch-shells wherein sea-nymphs reclined; wine casks whereon sat Bacchus, enthroned and surrounded by Satyrs; and last (though not least), noisy military bands—passed in close succession, though, we regret to be obliged to add, without attracting the attention which the infinite pains bestowed on the costumes seemed to have anticipated.

With the cessation of the rain a new excitement had sprung up, leaving the spectators eyes for nothing but the showers of *bon-bons* that poured on all sides—from the balconies, the carriages, and the crowd in the street. Everybody pelted everybody, and the little boys down below scrambled and fought for the treasures that dropped beneath the horses' hoofs, evidently regarding the mud which incrustated them as an additional relish. Naturally, when the fun grew faster and more furious, and the *bonâ fide* sweetmeats became exhausted, recourse was had to missiles not quite so harmless. Plaster *bon-bons* flew about like hailstones, and not a few of

those intended for the young men inflicted pretty sharp penance on Mala's tender skin; but then, it must be admitted that the young lady, aided by her squires, returned the compliment with interest. Especially did an old Neptune, in a sea-green car drawn by Tritons, distinguish himself in the conflict. Although single-handed, he took his aim so adroitly, now to the right, and again to the left (fortunately making use of sugar only), that the ladies were compelled to beat a hasty retreat behind the window-curtains, whence they pelted him unmercifully so long as he remained within sight.

Whilst leaning over to give him a parting salute, Arnold caught a glimpse of a face which he knew, but whose identity he taxed his memory in vain to discover. It was that of a woman with large, dark eyes rather fierce in expression, a clear olive complexion, and black hair twisted round the head in massive plaits. Regardless of the risk he ran by exposing himself, Arnold leaned forward a second time. She was talking in a quick, animated way to a young man in a black domino by her side; they were both immediately beneath the window, and the accent, somewhat foreign, struck his ear at once.

The gipsy-girl! Dida! of course! How could he forget that remarkable countenance?—but stay! if this is Dida, how came she by that elegant bonnet and that silk dress? And the young man with her—can that be Franz?

Arnold pauses in uncertainty—that slender youth, with bearing so distinguished, is not what he recollects in the young gardener,—and a painful suspicion flashed across his mind. At this moment, something fell from the adjoining window, alighting on the shoulders of a stout burgher beneath, while a loud scream caused every one to look round in astonishment:

“Oibò!—My armlet! my armlet!” The little Lili had indeed allowed the precious jewel to slip from her grasp: “Get away, you vilaine enfant! you *ranella*! you *sciocherella*!” continued the exasperated Signora in the cosmopolitan dialect she invariably used when excited.

“Do not distress yourself, Madame, it is quite safe,” said Arnold. He had observed the armlet seized immediately upon its descent by Dida’s companion, who now stepped back a few paces, as if to reconnoitre, and then, without the slightest apparent exertion, flung it in at the window, directing his aim so well, that it fell precisely on the dress of the owner, who clutched it greedily, and began a doleful lamentation over its supposed injuries, which were, however, visible to no eyes but her own. Leaving his mother to soothe Lili, who was perfectly “scared” by the hard names showered upon her, Arnold quickly left the room. The manner in which the ornament had been returned left him without a shadow of doubt—Robert’s prior

engagement was now explained, and with a mingled feeling of indignation against the thoughtless young man, and pity for the old father, Arnold resolved to be at the bottom of the affair, and if possible, prevent its going any further.

He made his way out with some difficulty, for not only was the pavement thronged, but the doorway of the shop was blocked up by a table used by several of the domestics as a means of seeing over the heads of the crowd. By dint of patience, he at length found himself close to the girl, and paused to consider whether he should address her or Robert, when a sudden movement around—a rushing and surging as of a mighty wave, carried him backwards with an irresistible force, and only by exerting all his strength was he able to stem the torrent, and secure a place of safety by first clinging to a lamp-post and then swinging himself on to a balcony, whence he saw with a shudder the reason of the alarm.

Six foaming horses dashed round the corner, their riders striving with desperate energy to hold them in—the populace flying before them down the narrow street like sheep, the strong trampling on the weak—leaping in at low windows—overturning the tables in the doorways—every one frantic with the instinct of self-preservation! These horses had been intended to precede immediately the chariot of the Carnival-King, but an unfor-

fortunate rumour having got abroad that owing to the rain the potentate would not appear, the crowd had closed in after the last carriage; and the poor animals, finding themselves swimming in a sea of struggling, shouting human beings, became unmanageable, and set off at full gallop. By the aid of the police and two or three courageous spectators, their career was soon stopped, but some time elapsed before order could be completely restored.

Arnold looked anxiously round for Dida, whom he at length discovered standing by the lamp-post which he had made use of, and casting hasty, troubled glances in all directions, as though in quest of some one. It was evident that, in the press, she had been separated from Robert. So much the better for his purpose, Arnold thought, as he descended from his retreat, and removing his mask, touched her lightly on the shoulder.

"Dida!"

The girl started, and turned hastily; in a moment recognition flashed upon her, and her face became scarlet.

"It is not right for you to be here alone, Dida. No girl should be in the streets to-day."

"I am not alone," she faltered, completely taken by surprise.

"You have lost your companion, you will not find him again in the crowd," Arnold continued, gravely,

while she hung her head, unable to meet his eye. "Come, Dida, you have had enough of the show, let me take you home."

"*Home!*" she said, drawing herself up with a scornful glance; "I have no home. I will never go back to that place again."

"Think of your father, Dida," said Arnold in a low voice, laying his hand persuasively on her arm. "Do not, I beseech you, throw away your own happiness, and his, for the pleasure of an hour."

Dida's only answer was a low sob, which she checked instantly. Arnold thought he perceived signs of relenting.

"Come, Dida! take off this folly," touching her silk dress; "I will see you safely home before they have missed you, and all may yet be right."

"No, no, no!" she exclaimed, impetuously; "it is too late!" and, before he was aware of her intention, she had broken away from him, and rushed through the crowd—a movement accepted as the signal of a fresh alarm, terror lending wings to the dullest imagination—and, in the commotion that ensued, any attempt at pursuit would have been futile.

Dispirited and anxious, Arnold re-entered the house, to the great relief of his mother, who had been in terror on his account, and seated himself at the window to consider what course he ought to take. Reflection, however, was impossible amid the prevailing uproar and the painful tumult of his own

thoughts; and the only plan that suggested itself to him was to seek out Robert the instant he found himself at liberty. He was somewhat surprised to see his mother hastily rise and withdraw from the window. The excitement of the previous alarm had been too much for her; she looked faint and pale, declaring that she could not trust herself to gaze at the car of Juggernaut, as she termed the gigantic throne which now appeared in sight, ploughing its slow way along the crowded street.

This, the climax of the procession, compared to which all that had gone before served merely as an introduction, was a gilt chariot nearly fifty feet in height, and drawn by six gaily-caparisoned horses, mounted by postilions. At each corner, half-way up, was a unicorn, the bridle in its mouth held by a tiny boy in the powdered wig and topcoat of an old-fashioned coachman. Had Madame Müller witnessed the expression of terror on the faces of these poor children, perched thus at such a height above the fiery horses and excited mob, another feature would have been added to her already not very favourable impressions of Carnival. High above all, on a level with the roofs of the houses, sat a handsome young man—Hans Wurst, the Lord of Misrule. He betrayed not the slightest sign of fear, although the guidance of his cumbrous equipage through the intricate windings of the narrow, crowded streets must have been a matter of no small peril.

Animated, laughing, in the full enjoyment of his unenviable position, he continued to bow to the right and left, and to scatter handfuls of *bon-bons* among his liege subjects.

At length, at what seemed to Arnold an interminably slow pace, the chariot passed on, its train of maskers with it, and in an incredibly short time the street assumed a deserted aspect.

"Thank heaven that foolery is over for another year!" sighed Arnold. Now, he thought, he would see his mother and Lili home, and then wend his way to the West-gate. In this calculation he was defeated, however, by the Signora, who begged him to return for her: "she did not like," she affirmed, with an interesting timidity, "to venture on the street alone." With an impatient groan at her folly, and a conviction that she might have travelled to Timbuctoo without chance of molestation, he agreed to her request, and the little party broke up.

As soon as he had succeeded in disposing of the Signora, Arnold directed his steps towards the West-gate, his mind tormented by doubts and fears. For several months he had not seen much of Robert. A second professorship falling vacant not long after that given up to Lucien, he had been appointed to it, and his new duties demanded for a time all the attention he could bestow upon them. In addition to this, there had been a journey to Kirchenstein to induce his mother to remove to Städtlein—the reason

for the change will be easily perceived—after which there naturally devolved upon him a thousand-and-one little cares in his new character of householder, so that he had but little leisure to spare for Robert.

True, when an interval longer than usual elapsed without their seeing each other, he had gone to Dr. Frank's in quest of him, but never without a distinct perception that, in some way, a barrier had arisen between them, that his influence over the young man was not what it had once been. Arnold was inclined to attribute this to a change in himself; he knew that he was no longer so lighthearted or so *sociable*, in Robert's sense, as in former days: the blow had fallen too heavily to admit of his recovering himself at once by a mere effort of will, and it seemed, therefore, only natural that Robert, with his lively temperament, should consider him dull and moody, and should seek companionship elsewhere. But none the less had this estrangement been an additional trial to Arnold, for he had gradually come to regard the young Englishman almost as a brother.

He now recollected with a pang of remorse that his mother had observed the alteration in Robert, and urged upon him, only a few days before, the necessity of being more with him. "He is not like the same Robert who came to us at Kirchenstein," said the widow, into whose large heart the fatherless, in her opinion *worse* than motherless, boy had

crept. "My mind misgives me, Arnold. He used to be so frank and open; now, while he is here, he is evidently under restraint, and will sit for half-an-hour at a time without speaking; it is so unlike Robert. I wish you could spare an afternoon to walk with him, or induce him in some way to give you his confidence. There is certainly something preying on his mind." Arnold promised to act upon this advice, but had been obliged to put off the attempt until after the Carnival. Would that he had postponed matters less important! he might have been able to avert the crisis which seemed impending.

As he continued his rapid walk, how many little circumstances flashed upon his mind that would have roused his suspicions, had he not been so absorbed in himself and his own troubles! Robert's sudden love for boating alone, and in all weathers; the number of times he had been informed by Frau Frank that the Baronet had gone into the country—to see a friend; had he but thought of inquiring a little further! the snatches of song into which Robert burst occasionally—songs which Arnold ought to have recognised at the time, as he did now, to be Bohemian *Volkslieder*. It is not too much to say, that while these recollections forced themselves upon him one after the other, Arnold felt as if he had been guilty of neglecting some important trust committed to him. And yet, in reality, he knew

that not a shadow of responsibility attached to him with regard to Robert.

Frau Frank had just returned from witnessing the procession, and, with bonnet and mantle thrown carelessly aside, was taking her ease and a hasty snack. She flung her veil over her head as Arnold entered, with a shocked consciousness of baldness and sparse grey hairs: "Dear Herr Müller, how you frightened me! you really must excuse me—I—I am not fit to be seen!"

"Don't mind me, I beg of you," returned Arnold, abruptly; "I have only come in search of Robert. Is he in?"

"No!" said the good lady, somewhat startled; "we supposed he was with you. He went out early this morning, and left word that he would not be home till very late—perhaps not until to-morrow. Of course, I imagined he was going to stay at your house. It was a great disappointment to me, his not being of our party," she continued dolefully; "he is so lively and full of fun. But you have not had him either!—where *can* he be?"

"With one of his college-friends, probably," said Arnold, with as much indifference as he could assume. The doctor's wife was a very good-natured old lady; but she was not troubled with too much brain, and he did not care to entrust his apprehensions to her. "Did he say nothing about the ball?"

"O dear yes!—he is looking forward to it with immense pleasure!"

"But did you hear him say positively that he meant to go to-night?"

"Certainly! he bade Marsden pack up his things in a bag, which he took with him this morning. I think he intends to dress at your house, and go with you to the hall. A magnificent costume he has!" continued the garrulous old lady, unmindful of the anxiety Arnold could not wholly conceal—"Prince Harry, you know. The *costumier* sent it home last night, and he put it on to please me; he is always so good-natured, dear boy! I could not resist asking him to give me the pleasure, although it went against my conscience to tease him when he was looking so harassed and exhausted; but you know, Herr Müller, an old woman like me has not many opportunities of seeing such finery!"

"Robert looked exhausted, Frau Frank? What was the matter?"

"Well, you see! he has been so very much occupied lately—attending to a commission from a friend of his uncle in New Zealand, who wrote to him to send out—ach! I can't tell you how many things. It has taken Sir Robert quite a week to attend to it. I would never have heard a word about it (for he is not fond of speaking of the kind things he does), but the boxes were sent here by mistake, instead of direct to the railway station. I read the

address on them all myself: 'Mr. Robert Clayton, Dunedin, per steamship *Germania*, viâ Hamburg.' They were brought here the other day—Friday was it?—or Saturday? Let me think—yes, it was Friday!—two days after the doctor left for Berlin. Sir Robert was out at the time, and when he came in and saw them here in the passage, what a pet he was in to be sure! I don't think I ever saw him so put out before, the whole three years he has been with us. But it is not to be wondered at; for, if the steamer had sailed in the meantime, it would have been very provoking. I must say, I think it is very amiable and right-minded in Sir Robert to take so much trouble for this friend of his uncle, after the disagreeable letters he has had from Mr. Chesney lately."

"Ha?" exclaimed Arnold, a new light breaking in upon him; "then he has had bad news from England?"

"I have my own reasons for thinking so," returned Frau Frank, mysteriously; "in fact, Herr Müller, I don't mind telling *you* that, from the tone of the Rector's letters to my husband, there seems to be a little misunderstanding between them at present. Sir Robert has been spending lavishly, or something of that sort. I don't exactly know what, but I *do* think Mr. Chesney is very hard on the boy."

"I should like to see Marsden," said Arnold, as he

rose to go—Marsden, probably, knew more of his master's affairs than did the old lady.

"Marsden is gone for a week's holiday. I told Robert that it was very injudicious to spoil servants so; but he only laughed, and said that it was fair he should have a little pleasure during the Carnival. Of course, after *that* I could not interfere."

More alarmed than he cared to acknowledge even to himself, Arnold left the house. This disagreement with his uncle!—could it be possible that his majority was definitely postponed?—the packages going to New Zealand!—was Robert Clayton the assumed name of the young Baronet? These forebodings rapidly took a tangible form: Robert was about to carry into execution what he had so long threatened; he had chosen his time well—when the Doctor was absent from home, and the prevailing festivities furnished him with a feasible excuse for getting rid of his valet; and, worst of all, Dida was to be the partner of his voluntary exile! "Oh, Robert! Robert!" Arnold groaned in his despair, "how am I to save you?"

As he reached the end of the long street, and was about to turn into the market-place, a figure at the opposite corner caught his eye. It was Dida—no longer in silken attire, but in her own dress—engaged in earnest conversation with a tall, masculine-looking woman, enveloped in a cloak, who was minutely examining the charm round her neck. A

man completed the group, but Arnold saw by a glance that it could be neither Robert nor Franz, for he was elderly and grey-haired. He crossed the street, determined to know from Dida where Robert was; but her quick eye perceived him, and before he could reach them, the three had disappeared down a side lane, leading to the river. Arnold followed, but they were nowhere visible. Judging that they had entered some house, he gave up the attempt to trace her, and resumed his homeward way, with a fresh perplexity added to the mystery.

What ought he to do? should he proceed at once to Eckhardt, learn from old Bekker all he knew, and bring him back to Städtlein to claim his adopted daughter, and thus frustrate one part of the project on foot?

Arnold shrank from this—what right had he to incriminate Robert on mere supposition? he had nothing more than suspicions to communicate, and, the anger of the old man and Franz once roused, might they not take steps that would prove ruinous to the misguided lad? On the other hand, was not the father entitled to know of his discovery at once, that he might be able to prevent the impending misfortune? Arnold hesitated.

A neighbouring church clock struck seven. The question was settled—right or wrong, there was now no time for the journey to Eckhardt; if Robert

meant to be present at the ball, it would only be in the early part of the evening, to disarm suspicion, and throw his friends off their guard ; and Arnold felt that he could not run the risk of losing this last opportunity.

His resolution taken, all indecision vanished ; and he made the best of his way, pondering on the most judicious mode of appealing to the young Baronet.

No easy question to solve ! Robert had changed so within the last few months, that Arnold felt as though he had entirely lost the key to his heart.

CHAPTER XXXI.

. THE BALL.

WE have already mentioned Herr von Holz, the Director of the Academy of Painting in Dörfchen, in connection with the *Tableaux-Vivans*, and must now introduce him a little more fully to the reader. A thorough artist in every sense of the word, he was nevertheless imbued with a few peculiar crotchets, which he insisted on carrying into practice in everyday matters, after a fashion productive sometimes of results sufficiently contrary to the expectations of the originator. One of his most fixed ideas was, that Art, high Art, should pervade the atmosphere of every man's life, effecting for his intellectual nature what Christianity achieves in the moral region. How far he was right in this view, it is not for us to judge. In the preaching of his Art-gospel, he was at least consistent, and left no method untried to convert others to his way of thinking.

Art had its higher and its lower aspects; the former for those who had the inborn perception and the culture necessary for its appreciation—the latter for the world at large; and it was for the develop-

ment of what we may call "Art in common life" that Herr von Holz took up the cudgels most vehemently. Abstractly, he admitted, Art in its highest forms could be left to take care of itself—there would always be the limited few to whom it was a second Nature; but how was the great Mass to be leavened by this love for the Beautiful, if it was permitted to go on in dullness and grossness—drinking out of formless cups, eating from coarsely-made plates, decking itself in inharmonious contrasts, accustoming its gaze to clumsy buildings? In short, he waged perpetual war against the *commonplace*—a word which, he affirmed, ought to be weeded from the vocabulary of every educated people. Nothing was commonplace in Nature, nothing should be commonplace in *human* nature or its surroundings. This crusade he carried into the most trivial affairs—not a lady of his acquaintance but anxiously ran over the separate items of her *toilette* when he was seen approaching, lest a jarring ribbon or purposeless flower should elicit some unflattering comment.

The various Carnival-balls had long been the subject of his contemptuous criticism. What he called a "glorious opportunity for creating a classical revival" was frittered away in a gaudy show that would have disgraced a fourth-rate country theatre! The ladies were somewhat at a loss to discover how the costumes they adopted could assist or hinder a "classic revival," but as Carnival after Carnival

passed, and Herr von Holz still harped on the same chord, it was agreed on all sides to gratify him by letting him have his own way.

A petition was addressed to him by the leaders of fashion in Städtlein, asking him to organize a masquerade, and pledging themselves to personate only such characters as he chose to select.—Herr von Holz was in his element.—No more senseless, meaningless puppets, stalking about in costumes contradicted by their very gait! No more effeminate cavaliers, sulky muses, idiotic peasants!—No! the characters should be drawn from the purest sources, and each aspirant for admission should be assigned the part best suited to his or her cast of features; and Herr von Holz proceeded to distribute the rôles according to his own notions, with an impartiality that provoked not a little discontent.

One lady had always considered herself specially adapted for heroic, mannish parts—as, for instance, Portia; and was therefore not a little indignant at being asked to appear as Recha—“a little chit of a thing, half-Jew, half-Christian!” as she informed him in an angry letter.—Another wanted to know how she was to dance in the long robe of Iphigenia? The Herr Director might think he had complimented her very highly in assigning her this particular rôle, but for her part she was not going to give up the pleasure of a waltz for any classical nonsense!—Even Mala was not satisfied. Lucien’s part was that of

Max Piccolomini, and she wished to be Thekla ; but Herr von Holz was inexorable at first—she figured in his ideal as Titania, and it was long before her entreaties moved him. In short, meddling with the ladies and their costumes raised a very hornet's nest about his ears, and soon he had cause to wish that he had let well alone.

If this was his early experience, however, what a confirmation did it receive on the eventful evening—the evening that was to exhibit so many poetic creations in all the bloom of reality and life ! Alas ! poor von Holz ! Detained in Dörfchen by unforeseen circumstances, it was late when he arrived in Städtlein, and meantime there was no Master of the Ceremonies to take his place.

What a sight met his gaze on entering the ball-room ! Clärchen deliberately turning her back on Egmont, who was revenging himself by waltzing with Di Vernon—Amy Robsart flirting with William Tell—Rowena *vis-à-vis* to Hamlet—Henry the Seventh making love to his own grand-daughter—Rizzio offering an ice to Queen Elizabeth—the Princess d'Este hanging absorbed on the arm of Tasso—Leonora *tête-à-tête* with Julius Cæsar—Gretchen laughing to Mephistopheles—Faust attentive to Flora Macdonald—while Petrarch and Harry the Eighth vied with each other for a smile from Minna von Barnhelm !

Alas ! poor Herr Director ! He had secured his end

in detail, but Nature, after all, is stronger than Art, and an *ensemble* was beyond his power. He could not persuade the appropriate characters to form themselves into the quadrilles specified in the programme. Shakespere, Scott, Goethe, would *not* be kept apart; and as the evening wore on without the symmetry of his scheme having a chance to assert itself, Herr von Holz waxed furious, and stamped about the hall like a maniac.

While in this mood, he came upon a sight that made him pause for a moment and even forget his disappointment—Mala, sitting with a somewhat pensive air in an ante-room by the side of Fräulein Martha.

"Why! my little Thekla!" he exclaimed, in surprise (for Mala was a special favourite of his) "not dancing? What can all the young fellows be thinking of, to allow you a moment's respite? Where is your Max?"

"I don't know!" returned Mala, with an attempt at a smile; "I have not seen him all the evening."

"Zounds!" cried the old gentleman, "you make me wish myself young again. This will never do! The prettiest flower in the room hanging its head in a corner! I must find some one for you directly," and he was turning vigorously to put his promise into execution, when Mala stopped him with an imploring look:

"Pray don't, dear Herr Director! I have just

been dancing. I would rather rest a while. I—I feel rather faint.”

Herr von Holz looked a little doubtfully on the phenomenon of a young girl deliberately sitting still, with the tempting strains of the *Wiener Kinder* ringing in her ears, and seemed inclined at first to argue the point; but something in the expression of Mala's face arrested him, and he merely patted her cheek: “Well, well! since you are so positive, I suppose I must yield! You are a princess for to-night, you know! But I must bring M. Descroix to you; he little knows what a famous chance for a *tête-à-tête* he is losing!”

Hardly had the old gentleman left her, than Mala was startled by a strange voice: “Dear Fräulein! how happy I am to make your acquaintance!—Do you know me?”

Mala looked up in surprise. A dark face with brilliant eyes bent over her—a graceful figure in black lace spangled by silver stars stood by her side. She paused in uncertainty. The lady laughed:

“I don't know why I should expect *you* to know me, when that naughty boy failed to recognise his own sister!”

“Mariechen! Are you Mariechen?” exclaimed Mala, who now for the first time perceived that the new-comer was accompanied by Arnold.

“Certainly! that is my name. And you are Mala! I should have recognised you anywhere

from Arnold's description. Arnold! introduce me properly. This lady, I am sure, is Fräulein Martha?"

"This is rather unexpected, is it not?" said Mala, after Arnold had obeyed his sister's imperious mandate.

"Yes! I had not the slightest idea yesterday morning that I should be here this evening. My uncle was called suddenly to Dörfchen; I, of course, accompanied him—and equally of course, teased Director von Holz into giving me a ticket! The old tyrant! Do you know, I had the greatest difficulty in getting it. He actually pretended that I should spoil the character of his ball, by appearing in nineteenth-century costume! But I had my own way in the end, as usual," added the young lady, with a laugh.

"I do not think you could have chosen anything more becoming. Your dress is beautiful," said Mala naïvely.

"It was fortunate I had it with me, was it not? By the help of the half-moon in my hair, I flatter myself I make a tolerable *Night*."

Mariechen was not wrong in this estimate of herself—face and figure were such as could not pass unnoticed in a crowd, and Mala secretly wondered that Arnold had never spoken to her of his sister's beauty. But, in fact, as Mariechen said, it was not without some difficulty that Arnold had recognised

the simple girl, whom he escorted to Berlin eighteen months previously, in the brilliant woman, who, leaning on the arm of an old gentleman, had suddenly accosted him by his Christian name.

"And what do you think I found him doing?" continued Mariechen, gaily pointing to her brother. "Instead of making himself agreeable, like anybody in his senses—there he was by the door, looking absolutely miserable! with a face as long as though all the cares of the world were upon his shoulders.—But that is always the case with you geniuses! completely out of your element in a ballroom.—By the way!" she broke off suddenly, "where is Sir Robert? I am longing to renew my acquaintance with him—there is no nonsense about *him*, at any rate!"

"He has not arrived yet," said Arnold, turning abruptly away, lest he should betray too much to Mariechen's quick eye, and at the same moment Herr von Holz made his appearance with Lucien.

"Here is the truant, Thekla! Keep him fast, now you have got him! Ha! whom have we here?" he added, perceiving Mariechen, "my fair opponent?"

"*Me voilà!*" retorted Mariechen with a defiant curtsy; "I warned you I should come! Now tell me, Herr Director, do I look so terribly out of place among your heroines?"

"You have me at a disadvantage, Fräulein!" said the old gentleman gallantly, "my programme tells me that you *do*—my eyes, that you do *not*!"

"Thank you, Herr Director! then, perhaps, you will graciously permit me to dance?"

"Fräulein! were I to refuse permission, there would be rebellion in the camp!"

This being tantamount to the freedom of the ball-room, Mariechen requested her brother to conduct her to her own party: "Adieu for the present, dear Mala! we shall see each other in a few minutes!"

As she left the room, Lucien exclaimed: "A magnificent creature! What a figure! what eyes! You seem to know her?"

"She is Arnold's sister," replied Mala quietly.

"Arnold's sister!" echoed Lucien in surprise; "do you mean to say that he owns a girl like that? Pooh! they have not a feature in common."

"That may be! she is none the less his sister. Is she not beautiful?"

"*Beautiful!* She is dazzling! bewitching!—What a pity that you are not dark, Mala! dark beauty is so much more commanding!—so much more imposing!"

Mala made no rejoinder, but her lip trembled a little.

"How superbly she is dressed, too!" continued Lucien; "that diamond-tiara! there is not one like it in the hall—old Baroness Cannstein may hide her diminished head. But if she is really Arnold's sister, Mala, how do you account for the jewels? *He* is as poor as a church-mouse."

Mala was too much engrossed by painful thoughts to reply,—“it was not kind of Lucien to dilate so upon Marie’s attractions to *her*,” and aunt Martha said,—

“I believe the uncle who adopted her is very wealthy.”

“Come, Mala!” said Lucien peevishly, after he had sat in silence for a while. “Do you expect me to bury myself in this corner all the evening? We can talk together any day at home; besides, it looks so absurd. What will people think?—Come! a waltz will do you good!”

Mala went through the waltz with him, but her pleasure was gone. As soon as it was over, he led her back to aunt Martha, and she saw no more of him until he brought Mariechen to bid adieu.

“Oh!” cried the dark beauty with sparkling eyes, “Mala! still here? Have you not been dancing? I have, the whole evening.—I think I never enjoyed myself so much before. It is positively delicious; and M. Descroix is the best waltzer I ever knew!”

Mala made no response, but aunt Martha looked daggers at the couple, and requested Lucien to see if their carriage had arrived. When they were fairly on the way home, Mala’s pent-up feelings found vent in throwing herself into aunt Martha’s arms, and exclaiming in wild, tearless misery: “Oh aunt Martha! what shall I do? what shall I do?”

“My darling!” was all the poor aunt could find

to say, as she pressed her to her bosom; "he is not worthy of you, Mala."

"It is I who am not worthy of him," said Mala, with a sob; "he is tired of me. I am not brilliant nor fascinating like Arnold's sister.—Ah! Lucien! Lucien! Why do I love you so, when you no longer love me?—Promise me, aunt!" she added with sudden energy, lifting herself from her aunt's embrace, "promise me that you will not say a word to papa about what has occurred? he thinks badly enough of Lucien without this!"

"No, Mala—I will make no such promise," said aunt Martha warmly; "Lucien has neglected you shamefully—disgracefully—the whole evening, and your father ought to know it. If poor, dear Gottlob had not been kept at home by that unfortunate asthma, Lucien would never have ventured to behave in such an unaccountable way. I wish you would give him up, Mala."

"Give him up! Do you know what you are saying, aunt? I would die first!—Promise me, auntie," she continued, imploringly, "that you will say nothing to papa!—it will only widen the breach between us. It was quite natural that Lucien should like to amuse himself, and forget me;" and with much more in the same strain, Mala contrived before they reached home to extort the desired promise from her aunt.

How often in after days did the recollection of

that dark, sorrowful drive haunt her! How bitterly did she reproach herself for yielding to Mala's fatal affection for her cousin!

We must now return to Arnold, whom we left standing by the entrance to the ball-room. As the evening wore on, and no Robert appeared, his eager hope gave place to sickening anxiety; and he resolved to proceed at once to the railway station and make inquiries there. His dress, fortunately, had nothing particularly striking about it, and beneath his large cloak would not attract observation.

He found the terminus deserted and silent; the last train for the night had started; no one at all corresponding to Robert had been observed by the officials. Arnold insisted upon seeing the station-master, to whom he delivered a minute written description of the young Baronet, and also of Dida; and after giving his own address, in order that he might be communicated with at once, should Robert attempt to leave by the early morning train, he returned home weary and downcast.

He was met at the door by his mother: "Arnold," she said in a low, hurried tone, "what is wrong? Something has happened to Robert, I fear. There is a young man here, a working man, who insists that Robert is here; that he went with you to the ball, and says he will not go without seeing him. He seems very much excited. What can it all mean?"

"Don't alarm yourself, mother!" said Arnold,

calmly; "I shall soon satisfy him about Robert;" but his heart sank within him. Dida had been missed at home, and Franz was here in search of her. As he entered the room, carefully closing the door behind him, he saw at a glance that his suspicions were correct—the young gardener confronted him with glaring eyes and threatening gestures: "Where is Dida?—where is my girl whom you have enticed away by your devilish arts?" he shouted, rather than cried; and stopped, on perceiving that it was not the Englishman who stood before him.

"Calm yourself, Franz!—Robert is not here," Arnold said quietly.

"Not here!—then he is in the town-hall! By my faith! I will go there! I will drag him out before all his fine friends, and declare him to be what he is—a villain!"

Franz strode towards the door. Arnold was before him; and, the key in his pocket, presented a calm, immoveable front to the infuriated lad, who seized him by the arm, saying in a hoarse whisper, "Unlock that door! or—I will be the death of you! Don't withstand me," he continued piteously, clasping his hands in an agony of despair; "don't thwart me! I have no quarrel against you; but I am not answerable for myself. Give me the key! Sir Robert Chesney I must and *will* find!"

"Franz!" said Arnold again, sorrowfully, "would that I knew where the unfortunate young man is.

I would take you to him myself. He has wronged you cruelly—cruelly!”

Franz paused; something of his wild look disappeared.

“I give you my word that I do not know where he is,” Arnold continued, in the same quiet tone; “I have been in search of him the whole afternoon in vain.”

The rough lad sank with a groan into a chair, his face concealed by his hands. Presently he looked up wildly: “God judge between him and me!—he has robbed me of all I had. How happy we were before that day—curses on it!—when you and he first came to destroy my life! Oh, Dida! Dida!”

Suddenly he sprang to his feet in a frenzy: “Give me that key!” he shouted; “I *will* see him!—before an hour has passed, we shall know which is the better man!” and he raised his arm to fell his opponent to the ground.

They were both of a height—both tall, powerfully built; but Franz was desperate, whereas Arnold was perfect master of himself. He seized the uplifted hand, and, holding it in a grasp that effectually paralysed Franz, exclaimed, “Are you mad?—is *this* the way to find Sir Robert?” when a loud knock at the street-door arrested his attention.

“It is he!—the devil and all his angels fight for him now!” said Franz; and, extricating his arm with sudden fury, he possessed himself of the key, and

was at the bottom of the stairs in an instant, closely followed by Arnold.

The street-door opened, and there entered—not Robert, but two individuals—strangers to all present, old acquaintances of ours—a young man, short of stature, plain of feature; an old one, with spectacles, a wig, and an umbrella.

Book the Seventh.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ALICE.

ON a bright, frosty afternoon in February, a few days before the events narrated in the foregoing chapters, Edward Tooke might have been seen walking on the high-road between Tredhill and Ilmington. Judging by his decided step and rapid pace, one who knew him well would have inferred that something extraordinary was in the wind—that Edward was engaged on a mission which promised to tax all his powers. To tell the truth, he was bound on an errand that presented itself to his inner consciousness as the most purely selfish he had ever undertaken in his life, and he had been urged to it by his mother.

“My son!” she had said to him, when, coming suddenly in upon him in the middle of the preceding night, she had found him wrestling, struggling, striving in vain to flee from himself—“my poor boy! you have not given me your confidence in this matter. I will not seek to force myself upon you; but take my advice: Leave it all in the hands of God; speak to Alice Chesney of your love for her;

and accept her answer as the manifestation of His will."

And Edward resolved to do this. It might be fatalism; it might be presumption; the conflict had grown too keen for endurance; in some way it must be ended. Better far that he should never again look upon Alice than continue to feed the fire that was consuming him—better never to hear her voice, than to halt thus perpetually between two opinions, tossed hither and thither like a wave of the sea.

As Edward crossed the stile, and entered the "short-cut" that led through the fields to the Rectory, he perceived, a few yards in advance of him, a well-known figure, and the blood rushed to his heart. It was Alice. Edward had chosen his time in the hope of meeting her thus, as he had frequently done before; he fancied that what he had to say would be more easily told walking by her side, than in the drawing-room at the Rectory, with the chance of being interrupted by Mr. Chesney. But now that she was actually there, within sight, his courage failed, and he almost resolved to postpone his communication.—Cowardice! In a few minutes he rallied his forces, and made up to her.

"A glorious afternoon, Miss Chesney, is it not?"

Alice turned with a bright look, and said, as she gave him her hand, "I am so glad you have come, Mr. Edward! Do you know, it is very hard to be

alone on a day like this! The air is so exhilarating, it makes one feel gayer and more sociably inclined than usual, don't you think so?"

Poor Edward wished that a little gaiety and sociality could by some process be infused into him at the moment, but he merely said, "It is, certainly, capital weather for walking. Have you been far?"

"Oh, no! only to The Cedars. I generally make a run over there every afternoon, unless Lucy sends word that she is coming to us. And, you know, she has been confined to the house some weeks now."

"How is Lady Charleswood to-day?"

"A little better, I am glad to say; but she does not seem to have quite got over the alarm at Tredhill yet."

"It roused all the old, dormant feelings," said Edward, compassionately; "she is very much to be pitied."

"When are you going to see her again? Your visits always do her good. If I did not love her so much, I should really be jealous of you, Mr. Edward. At times, I believe she would rather see you than me!" Edward said nothing, and Alice continued, "She is anxious to know when we are to have the pleasure of hearing you in Ilmington again. Do you recollect the first time you preached for papa, after we returned, Mr. Edward?"

"Can I ever forget it?" burst forth Edward, vehemently.

Alice started at the unusual tone, and quickened her pace.

"Miss Chesney!—Alice!—bear with me a moment! I have no right to address you so; but I can no longer conceal from you the love you have inspired. Ever since that day, when I first learned to know you, I have been tormented, maddened, by thoughts of my own unworthiness. I dared not speak to you of what I felt, but now I *must*. Alice! Alice! I love you better than my life."

For some time Alice did not reply; she hurried onwards, her head bent down.

Edward interpreted her silence, and his heart failed: "I have wounded you—hurt you!" he exclaimed, sadly; "forgive me, Miss Chesney, I will no longer annoy you by my presence."

"Stay!" said Alice, faintly, and as she turned he perceived that her eyes were filled with tears; "you have not wounded me; but—but—this has taken me rather by surprise.—Oh, Mr. Edward!" she continued, suddenly, "why have you told me this? Next to Lucy you were my best friend, and now—and now—"

"We must part?" said Edward. "Alice!" he went on, passionately, "you know not what you are to me. You have been my dream by night and by day. Until I saw you, love—the love of the creature—was

an empty, meaningless word to me, and now!—Oh, Alice, I have made an idol of you, God forgive me! I have worshipped the very ground on which you trod. Do not—do not wreck my hope! You are startled now, dear Alice, but at some future time—perhaps—”

“Dear Mr. Edward,” Alice interrupted, mournfully; she had recovered her composure, although she trembled, visibly, from head to foot; “I dare not let you leave me thus. I reproach myself most bitterly, for I fear I have given you cause to believe that I returned your love; but I have not misled you intentionally, Mr. Edward. I *do* love you, but only as a friend—as a sister. Who that knows your noble, unselfish life, could help loving you? But this—this that you ask can never be.”

Edward stood as if turned to stone. At length, with a painful effort, he said, “Forgive me, Miss Chesney—forget that I have ever spoken to you;” and, raising her hand to his lips, he added, hurriedly, “God bless you, Alice, and him who may be happy enough to win you!” and was out of sight in an instant.

Alice walked steadily on until she reached a little wood, and there, secure from observation, she seated herself on the trunk of a fallen beech-tree, and burst into tears—partly for Edward, partly for herself. Alice had no reason to condemn her previous conduct. The notion that Edward could have fixed his

affections upon her had never entered her mind. She had formed so exalted an estimate of his character, and devotion to his life-work, that such ideas as Love and Marriage were the last she would have thought of associating with him; and this, perhaps, had led her to act in a more frank, unreserved way towards him than would have been justifiable under ordinary circumstances. Beyond this, Alice knew that she had given him no encouragement, and therefore no remorseful thoughts mingled with the recollection—sufficiently painful—of his despairing look and broken utterances.

“Oh! it is terrible that an unmarried woman cannot make a friend beyond her own sex without something like this happening!” thought Alice, as she reflected on the misfortune the loss of Edward’s friendship would be to her, especially at this particular time, when she was so pressed by anxiety about Robert. The recollection of her cousin opened an old wound, and her tears flowed afresh. She seemed fated to make others miserable, and to alienate those she loved best. She felt sure that she would never see Edward again; he would shun her now, as Robert had done ever since that unhappy evening when he had asked her to be his wife, and she had refused him—refused him in a half-laughing way, for she did not believe him in earnest. How well she recollected the scene that followed! Robert rushing from the house in a fury, vowing that she,

and she alone, would be to blame if anything happened to him, for she had driven him desperate. Since then, their correspondence had almost ceased; she had written to him at intervals, but he had not replied, and Alice was haunted by a strange, undefinable fear of an impending catastrophe. She knew that several stormy letters had passed between the Rector and him, but her father had not taken her into his confidence, and she could only guess at what had occurred, and dimly fashion in her own mind the ghosts of possible horrors.

She no longer cared to consult Captain Hawkesworth. He still made a profession of exerting his influence with her uncle for the promotion of peace; but Alice invariably observed that, whenever he had been closeted with her father, Mr. Chesney was sterner, more exacting than usual; and, in fact, she had come to regard a display of irritability on the part of the Rector as the logical sequence to a visit from Tom. It is not surprising, then, that she distrusted her cousin. She feared, from what she had herself noticed, as well as from trembling hints dropped by Mrs. Hawkesworth, that the Captain was too much under the influence of his strange friend, and Alice sincerely wished the two years at Tredhill over, that they might leave the neighbourhood. These anxieties were none the easier to bear, that she had to keep them all to herself, for Lady Charleswood's state of health was such that Alice could not run the risk of

fretting her by disclosing too much. That very morning she had been debating with herself the expediency of entrusting her secret to Edward; he could not move her father, but he might at least have helped and guided her how to act. Now this was at an end, there was no alternative but to bear the burden alone, and endeavour to counteract, to the best of her ability, any hidden influences at work.

When Alice had come to this conclusion, she pursued her way home—no longer bright and animated as when she had met Edward, but with the weary expression of a mind ill at ease.

On arriving at the Rectory, she was met by the information that Mr. Chesney had inquired for her several times, and was now awaiting her in the library.

Alice's heart sank still lower. What she had so long dreaded was a reality. Sir Marmaduke had proposed for her. If it had but happened yesterday! or if he had only waited till to-morrow!—any time rather than the present, when she was so unnerved, so unequal to cope with the Rector. But there was no escape, and, summoning all her courage to her aid, she went at once to the library, without removing her bonnet. The Rector sat by the fire in an easy-chair, his face beaming with pleasant thoughts. Attitude and expression were alike unusual, and Alice knew them to be unfavourable symptoms.

"Did you send for me, papa?"

"Yes, Alice, I want to have a little conversation with you. There—never mind your bonnet. I won't detain you long."

Alice took the chair he pointed to, and awaited with a beating heart the communication that was to follow.

"I have just received a letter that has given me very great pleasure," began the Rector, "very great pleasure indeed. In fact, I may safely say, no occurrence that has taken place in our family within the last few years has seemed to me so full of promise for the future, and—and, in short, so thoroughly satisfactory in every respect.—You know, Alice, how unhappy these last few years have been. Ever since your poor mother's death, a cloud has been hanging over us, but now, I trust, it will be dispersed, joyfully, through you."

Mr. Chesney paused, evidently waiting for his daughter to say something; but Alice remained silent, and he went on: "You will be pleased and flattered, I am sure, to hear that this letter is from Sir Marmaduke Dale—to learn that he has requested permission to pay his addresses to you."

"If Sir Marmaduke had the perception of a gentleman," said Alice, with flashing eyes, "he would have seen long ago that his attentions were extremely distasteful to me."

Mr. Chesney rose from his chair in his astonish-

ment, and stood with his back to the fire, erect and majestic. "Did I hear aright, Alice? Did you say that Sir Marmaduke is *distasteful* to you?"

"Yes, papa, extremely distasteful," Alice replied, trembling at her own audacity.

"In what way?"

"Sir Marmaduke is all very well as a friend, but—but—but not as a husband. I—I do not think I can explain myself more explicitly," faltered Alice, without venturing to look up.

"But I insist upon knowing!" thundered the Rector. "A man in Sir Marmaduke Dale's position! A man respected and esteemed throughout the whole county, does you the honour to single you out from among all the ladies of his acquaintance, and you find his attentions *distasteful*! Come, Alice," he said, suddenly changing his tone, and resuming his seat, "don't let us discuss this question angrily. Do not let me be disappointed in you. You can be sensible enough when you choose, and I am not unreasonable. Let me hear the cause of your dislike to Sir Marmaduke."

Alice did not speak. She could not reduce her feelings readily to words that would convince her father. After a long pause, the Rector said calmly, "I am waiting for you, Alice."

"Well, then," said Alice, with the air of one who knows that what she is about to say will only make a bad case worse, "he is very old."

"Not *very* old, Alice," frowned the Rector. "A man of fifty is still in his prime, and I have reason to believe that Sir Marmaduke is under that age; besides, it is a positive advantage for a girl to marry a man of matured experience. You are very young, Alice, barely nineteen. If you had been a man, instead of a woman, you would have been under training for several years yet. A young man goes to college, and submits to a prescribed discipline which develops his powers, and fits him for future usefulness; but a young woman is, unfortunately, left entirely to herself, unless she chance to get a husband capable of directing her. From what I know of Sir Marmaduke," continued Mr. Chesney, "I feel sure that his greatest pleasure would be thus to assist in forming you."

Alice secretly wondered if the Rector had married her mother for the express purpose of *forming* her; but she merely said, "This seems to me a very one-sided view of marriage."

"It was St. Paul's view," retorted Mr. Chesney, angrily; "in what does its one-sidedness consist, may I ask?"

"Sir Marmaduke is to do all this for me, and what am I to do for him in return?"

"Show him respect, honour, affection, obedience."

"That is the love I owe to you, father; not such as I should give my husband," said Alice, steadily.

"Do you mean to fly in the face of the Bible,

Alice?" Alice made no response, and her father continued: "No doubt you would prefer some young fool, who would give you your own way in everything, and make you believe yourself perfect. What do you expect in marriage, that you do not find in Sir Marmaduke?"

"There must be reciprocity, papa; some sympathy of thought and feeling. When I marry, I must be sure that I shall be as great a help to my husband, in my own way, as he is to me."

"So you might be to Sir Marmaduke; the disparity of age is not so great as to preclude the possibility of sympathy. In fact, I think you admirably suited to each other. Sir Marmaduke has intellectual tastes; so have you. He is a man of great scientific knowledge, you would soon be able to enter into his pursuits." There was a pause of a few minutes, and Mr. Chesney continued: "That is one objection disposed of. If the others are of an equally childish nature, they will not have much weight with me. Go on, Alice,—your next?"

"Father," said Alice, desperately, "is it right in you to press me thus, when I tell you that I do not love him?"

"Surely, Alice, you would never allow yourself to *love* any man until you were sure that his affections were fixed on you?" said Mr. Chesney, severely. "If this is all you have to urge against Sir Marmaduke, let me tell you that you have only exhibited yourself

in the light of a spoiled child who does not know what is for her own good. You will learn to love Sir Marmaduke."

"I shall never alter my feeling towards him, papa. There are some people whom you cannot help loving, but he is not one of those."

"Ha!" said Mr. Chesney, as a sudden light broke upon him, "perhaps there is a reason for all this obstinacy? perhaps you have found some one that you really *can* love?"

"No, papa, not in the way you mean."

"Look me in the face, Alice! Don't sit there with your eyes fixed on the carpet." Alice lifted her eyes as she was directed, and met her father's gaze steadily. "Do you mean to tell me that there is no favoured suitor whom you prefer to Sir Marmaduke?" said her father, slowly.

"I do, papa."

The Rector groaned with impatience. "Do you know, Alice, that you are throwing away a chance such as you may never have again? There are very few men who would marry you simply for the sake of your talents. I warn you—Sir Marmaduke is attracted solely by your accomplishments; he says as much in his letter. You are not at all pretty, Alice."

"I know it, father. Why do you taunt me with it?"

"I do not taunt you. I only remind you of facts

you seem to have forgotten. There is not another girl in the county but would jump at such an offer. Are you aware that Sir Marmaduke has ten thousand a year? That he succeeds his cousin as Earl of Easdale?"

"Dear father, would you have me marry against my conscience, simply because there is a remote chance of my being one day Countess of Easdale?"

"*Against your conscience!* Must I listen to such a phrase from my own child? What object do you imagine I have in view in urging this step upon you, Alice, but your own good?" There was no answer. "Do you hear me, Alice?" Still Alice did not speak. "Do I ask you to marry a man of loose morals or blemished reputation? Answer me, this instant."

"No, papa."

"Have you ever heard a whisper against Sir Marmaduke's public or private life?"

"No."

"Do you not respect and esteem him?"

"Yes, as a friend——"

"Silence, Alice! Let us have no more nonsense. I will not allow an idle, sentimental whim to stand in the way of your future happiness. You will receive Sir Marmaduke to-morrow, in a becoming spirit, and listen to what he has to say like a rational being. Sit down now, and write to my dictation."

"Papa, I cannot marry Sir Marmaduke Dale."

"Is the girl possessed!—Unless you can produce a tangible, valid objection against him, you *shall* marry Sir Marmaduke, before you are many months older. You know me, Alice! I am not to be trifled with."

"I know you, papa," said Alice, quietly; "but you do not know *me*, if you think that I am trifling with you. I do not hope—do not wish, to find any objection to Sir Marmaduke more valid than those I have already mentioned. I do not love him, and for that reason, simply, I will not marry him. I will not be coerced into promising what I can never honestly fulfil—into doing what would commit both of us to a life of wretchedness. And if you refer Sir Marmaduke to me, I shall tell him so myself."

Having thus thrown down the gauntlet, Alice left the room before her father had recovered from his surprise.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DISCOVERY.

It was nearly midnight,—but Mr. Chesney sat by the library fire.

Downstairs the butler yawned and rubbed his eyes, wondered when his master intended retiring for the night, and shook his head over this departure from the ordinary routine of the house. "It meant no good, this late sittin' of the Rector's," so reasoned that functionary; "last time it 'appened was h'after a row with the Barrynet, and now it was Miss H'Alice's turn! It was h'all very well for Mrs. Marsden to give h'out, as 'ow Miss H'Alice 'ad a bad 'eadache! it didn't deceive *him*, John Drummond. W'y should she 'ave a 'eadache at dinner, and not one at luncheon? H'if h'other folks were blind, *he*, at least, could put two and two together. Sir Marmadook and his note—two; Mr. Chesney and Miss H'Alice—two; total, a bad 'eadache! W'at *was* the use of Mrs. Marsden a-perjurin' herself to swear black w'ite? She might talk till this time next year, she wouldn't pussuade John Drummond that the Rector was a h'angel. Mr.

Chesney was a h'awful gentleman, w'en 'is blood was h'up; and for *his* part, he would rether be as he was, plain John Drummond, than in either Sir Robert's or Miss H'Alice's shoes. There was *one* pint about the Rector, though—give a sartain h'old Gentleman his doo!—he *did* vally a good butler w'en he'd got him, and he'd h'always be'aved in the most gentlemanny way to him!"

Twelve o'clock struck, and still Mr. Chesney sat motionless, his eyes fixed on the fast-decaying embers. What does he see written in them, that his gaze is so steadfast, his attention so absorbed? "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity and vexation of spirit." What has his whole life been but one gigantic failure? After long years of sacrifice and toil, what is there now left to him that affords him the slightest pleasure? Mary gone! Walter gone! Alice bent upon thwarting his most secretly-cherished wish! Robert in open rebellion! Tom—well, yes! *there* is a little spot of comfort; he has, at least, the satisfaction of knowing that what he has done for him has not been thrown away. Perhaps, in after years, Robert may come to perceive, like Tom, that his (Mr. Chesney's) conduct has been dictated solely by the sincere desire for his real well-being; but at present, certainly, there does not seem much hope of that,—and with a heavy sigh, the Rector takes from his pocket a letter that has arrived a few hours before, and reads it for the twentieth time:—

"My dear Uncle,—

"I am favoured by a letter from you, in which you formally announce your intention of deferring my majority, on the ground of my being 'incapable to assume the management' of my own property.

"At one time, this decision would have been a source of great mortification to me, but not now. In the first place, I have made up my mind to accept my lot, for I am quite aware that any attempt at self-justification would be sneered at by you. In the second, I propose to pass the three years that intervene between the twenty-first of February and the date at which I shall be able to claim by *law* what is now withheld by *caprice*, in a way that will be pleasant as well as profitable. I have legally no right to appeal against your—as it seems to me—*arbitrary* proceeding, and I would not have you consider this protest as an endeavour on my part to lead you to alter your judgment. But none the less do I desire to record my firm conviction, that in acting thus you are guided by prejudice—not justice. Appearances may have been against me, but you were bound to inquire into *facts*—not to be swayed by the opinion of others. Have you done this? I leave the answer to your own conscience, and remain,

"My dear uncle,

"Yours, &c.,

"ROBERT CHESNEY."

"Was there ever a more thankless task than mine?" murmured Mr. Chesney, as he replaced the letter, and resumed his gloomy meditation.

Suddenly the sound of wheels on the gravel-walk outside struck upon his ear. An arrival at that time of night! Could Lucy be worse? Mr. Chesney walked to the window, and looked out; but there was no moon—everything was enveloped in a thick fog.

"Mr. Edward, sir!" announced Drummond, "he says he's very sorry to disturb you, but—"

"Show him in at once," said the Rector, hastily and Edward entered. He looked somewhat excited, but his manner was perfectly composed.

"You have come from The Cedars?" said the Rector, anxiously.

"No," returned Edward, slowly, "Mr. Chesney!" and he paused; "I regret to be the bearer of bad news. It only came to my knowledge an hour ago—I would not have intruded at this late hour, but it is essential you should hear it to-night."

"Make no apologies, Mr. Edward," said the Rector, who had turned deadly pale. "I know you would not alarm me unnecessarily. Captain Hawkesworth?"

"I have not seen him. I believe he is well," Edward replied, in the same subdued way. "I have brought my informant with me, Mr. Chesney. I—I think it best you should hear his story from himself.

He is a rough fellow, but thoroughly trustworthy. Shall I call him in?"

"Do so!" said the Rector, the livid pallor of apprehension overspreading his features, as he sank into a chair.

Edward opened the door, and said in a low voice, "Ellis!"

Our old friend Nosey was apparently not far off, for he entered without delay, and made his best bow to the Rector.

Mr. Chesney glanced at him: "I think I have seen you before," he said.

"It's like you hev, sir!" returned Jack, with a subdued chuckle, "I kep' comp'ny wi' Polly Waters, as war 'ousemaid 'ere, a pretty spell, sir. Per-haps you've seen me in church of a Sunday."

"And your name is —?"

"John Ellis, sir."

"Well, Ellis! I understand you have something to communicate to me—something to tell me?"

Nosey hesitated, and twirled his cap with an air of reluctance.

"There *war* somethink, Mr. Chesney, as I've told Mr. Ed'ard a'ready. I'd greatly pre-fer, sir, as he'd tell it t' you. I be'nt used, sir, t' speakin' t' quality," and Jack glanced round the handsomely-furnished room with a look of curiosity that deepened into positive awe, as his eye rested on the well-filled bookcases.

"If you have no objection, Ellis, I should like to hear what you have to say from yourself," said the Rector, brushing his hand with impatience across his face; while Edward murmured a low,

"Go on, Jack!—speak out like a man, and be as short as you can."

"Pray sit down, Ellis!" said the Rector suddenly, with the idea of thereby putting the fisherman more at his ease.

"Thank *you*, sir—I pre-fer to stand!"

"Well, then, stand! but for heaven's sake, man! don't keep me any longer in suspense!" and Mr. Chesney started from his chair and began to pace the room.

This was what Jack wanted. So long as the Rector continued (with a habit before mentioned) to fix him with his eye, Ellis was uncomfortable and ill at ease, but no sooner was he set at liberty than he began his narrative in a business-like fashion.

"Well, sir, since you air de-termined not t' hear Mr. Ed'ard (w'ich bein' a scholard knows 'ow t' speak), I'll make bold t' begin. You see, sir, this ev'nin' about nine o'clock, I war a-waitin' on t' beach, by t' old pier, for my mate, w'ich is Jem Saunders, as is well known t' Mr. Ed'ard here. I 'adn't bin able for t' go along wi' him, seein' as 'ow my Polly war took rether bad of a suddin, but 'owsumdiver I promised t' be on t' look-out wi' t' cart for t' help wi' t' un-loadin', and there I war. At first, there wa'nt no one on t' beach, an' I war beginnin' for t' feel it kind

o' lonesome, w'en I sees two men a-comin' along, a talkin' very thick, an' so occypied wi' themselves that they didn't make no count o' me—but then I war standin' in t' shaddy o' t' boatus. I'm not one as is givin' t' eaves-droppin', Mr. Chesney, sir—as Mr. Ed'ard here'll speak up for, if you ax him."

"We all know you, Jack. You need not fear being misunderstood," interposed Edward, hastily, with a view to expedite Ellis's not very rapid delivery.

"I wants t' pry into no man's secrets," continued Jack, sturdily; "but w'en I hears a name wot's better t' me nor my own good name, sir, it's nat'ral as I should cock my ears an' listen."

"Quite so, Ellis! quite so!" said Mr. Chesney, "and what did you hear?"

"Fust of all, sir, as I'm a tellin' on, I hears Mr. Ed'ard—his name—they war a-hopin' Mr. Ed'ard wouldn't be prowlin' about on none o' his 'pious works!'—them war their very words, sir; an' thinks I t' myself, 'Them two fellers is up t' work *under hatches*—if t' war all straight forrard an' above-board they wouldn't be afeard o' t' parson.' So I listens agin, an' then I hears your name, sir, an' one says, 'Who'd a thought t' old feller 'ad a bin sitch a precious flat? Tom turns him round his finger as if he war a girl!'"

Mr. Chesney started violently.

"Then they spoke a deal about t' Cap'n as I

couldn't quite make out, so I jest peeps round t' corner, an' t' light o' t' lamp wot I only hung up not ten minutes afore, war a-shinin' on their faces, an' I sees that one war short, an' t' other tall. T' short un war t' ugly, dark-lookin', little chap as is allays wi' t' Cap'n, sir, your nevvvy—him they calls Clayton. T' other, I didn't recog-nise, but he is a gallows-born, if iver there war one. I niver see two sitch wagi-bones, beggin' your pardin, sir, as them two. Now I'm a-comin' t' wot's brought me here t' night, sir, an' I'm afeard you won't b'lieve me, seein' as 'ow it consarns your own nevvvy, t' Cap'n over there," pointing in the direction of the Fort.

"Mr. Edward has told me that you are thoroughly trustworthy, Ellis," said the Rector, in an agony of apprehension, "I have no reason to disbelieve you."

Thus reassured, Jack continued, "Then I'll tell you gospel-truth, word for word, as near as I can reck'lect, wot them two war a talkin' on. One says—t' tall un, unbeknown to me—'So t' young barrynet's h'off?'—'No,' says t'other as is called Clayton, 'not yit; he sails on t' twinty-sivinth. He's took out his tickit, an' manidged for t' git his baggidge all square—so he says in a letter, Tom, he got t' day.'"

Mr. Chesney started again.

"'But it as near as possible fell through,' says Clayton agin, 'for t' traps war sent in mistake to home, istid o' direct t' station—t' war lucky t' old

Doctor war away from home, or it would a bin found out. But he's safe enough now,' says Clayton agin; 'he won't come back t' plague us in a hurry,' and then he larfed loud out.—'Don't make sitch a divil of a row!' beggin' your pardin, sir, says t' other, 'you'll be over-heard,' and they put their heads together an' confabbed, so as I couldn't make out a word. But I war de-tarmined for t' hear. Some-think war in t' wind about Sir Robert (which is a young gennelman as all t' county ought t' be proud on), an' I snuggles in a bit closer, an' hears wot made my flesh creep, as am a man not given t' narves. Clayton says, 'Then you'll do t' bizness? you go out by a diff'rnt line; you git fust t' New Zealand, an' you know t' rest!'—'I'll warrant I do!' says t' other, a larfin' in his turn; 'we'll soon git him up-country, an' divil a bit shall he iver come *down-country* agin!'"

Mr. Chesney stopped in his hurried walk, and leant against the wall for support. Edward gently assisted him to his chair, and said, "This is too painful for you to hear in detail, Mr. Chesney, shall I tell you briefly the rest of Ellis's discovery?"

The Rector faintly shook his head, and signed to the fisherman, who continued his tale with a subdued voice and a look of commiseration for the unhappy man.

"T' other one says then, sir, 'You must stump up, Bully!'—'Hon'rabable,' says Clayton, 'w'en t' Cap'n

comes into t' Barrynetcy, which will be afore long, he's t' give me three hundrid a year for ivery year we mannidge for t' keep t' young un away !'—'I'll be bound we'll keep him away long enough !' says t' other, 'but three hundrid is dooced little out of his sivin thousand.'—'Yes !' says Clayton, 'but I'll make it up in parquisites. One hundrid you may depend upon, rig'lar—more if I can spare it.'—'No,' says t' other, 'wi' a h'oath wot I won't repeat, 'that won't do, Clayton ! This 'ere's a hangin' bizness, an' you must make it wuth my while.'—'I wonder who's a takin' all t' risk ?' says Clayton in a ill-used voice, 'hevn't I bin in fear an' trimblin' for my neck iver since I come t' this cussed place ?'—'Dead men tell no tales,' says t' other.—'No ! but dead men's wives do !' says Clayton ; an' wi' that, my feelin's got so outragis, that I says below my breath, '*Willins !*' It wa'n't very sen-sible, I'll own, but I could not keep it under. They both started, an' cut an' run as fast as iver they could—'spect they thought as 'ow t' ghost they war a feared on war arter them. I waited a spell, for tho' you mayn't b'lieve it, sir, I war all of a trimble, and then I wint straight t' Mr. Ed'ard."

Ellis stopped abruptly, for a change had come over Mr. Chesney ; his eye was fixed and glassy ; his hand hung powerlessly by his side. Edward started to his feet, as the fear that this might be paralysis flashed across his mind : "Call Drummond, Jack !" he exclaimed, "but do not alarm the house."

Ellis had opened the door to put this order into execution, when he was met by Alice, who, kept awake by her own thoughts, had heard the unusual stir in the house, dressed hurriedly, and come down to inquire into its cause. On seeing Edward, she shrank back, but a glance at her father was sufficient to banish all selfish considerations. Kneeling down by his side, she took his hand in hers—it was icy cold—and proceeded to chafe it tenderly, while she whispered, in a voice rendered almost inaudible by dread: "What has happened, Mr. Edward? do not keep it from me! is it—is it, anything about Robert?"

"It is, my dear Miss Chesney!" Edward replied with a look of pity: "Do not alarm yourself—all may yet be right! But," he added with emphasis, "it is absolutely necessary that your father should be roused at once."

Alice appeared to comprehend him; by a great effort she recovered her composure, and appealed to the Rector in the way she judged from experience to be the most efficacious: "Father! father dear! Mr. Edward is here on business! he is waiting to speak with you!" There was no response. "Papa! there is no time to lose!" still the Rector remained impassive.

"Mr. Edward, this is terrible!" she exclaimed in an agony; never before had she known her father other than the calm, self-possessed man, full of life and energy.—"Oh, papa! don't you know me?"

wont you speak one little word?" and her hot tears fell upon the hand she held.

It was suddenly withdrawn—a convulsive shudder ran through the strong frame—Mr. Chesney sat upright, and drew his hand across his face as one bewildered.

Edward prudently left the room, lest the sight of him should suggest too suddenly painful associations.

The Rector's eye fell upon the bloodless, scared face of his young daughter, as she knelt in the white evening-dress she had hastily thrown on, and he started: "Mary!"

Could it be possible that the weight of this unknown blow had deprived her father of his senses?

"It is I, papa! it is Alice! Don't you know me, dear, dear father?" she cried, almost beside herself with apprehension.

Mr. Chesney put his arm round her, and drew her close to him—for the first time in his life. There was silence for a few minutes. But Alice had not forgotten Edward's hint, and whispered gently: "Dear father! this—this terrible thing that has happened—may not I know it?"

The Rector groaned, pushed her from him, and buried his face in his hands.

"Mr. Edward says there is yet time to remedy the evil, whatever it may be——"

"Too late! too late!" muttered the Rector;
"Robert is dead, and I have killed him."

In spite of herself, Alice started, and looked imploringly at Edward, who had entered silently, and now stood behind her father's chair.

"Mr. Chesney!" he said, in a low, clear voice that seemed to thrill through every nerve of the Rector, "it is *not* too late! if you can but rouse yourself from this despondency, by God's help, we shall yet be able to save Sir Robert."

Mr. Chesney mechanically put his hand to his head, as though unable fully to understand the import of the words spoken, and looked helplessly at his daughter: "What does he say?" he moaned.

Edward advanced: "Mr. Chesney! try to recollect what Ellis has just told you. Sir Robert is not to sail before the twenty-seventh—this is only the twenty-third; we have four clear days to save him. Captain Hawkesworth ——." Edward paused.

At the mention of his nephew's name Mr. Chesney shivered slightly, and the young man perceived that the missing link was now found.

"Enough, Mr. Edward!" he said with agitation, "I remember all;" and he feebly rose and tried to regain composure by pacing the room.

Alice hastily procured a glass of wine, and when her father had been induced to drink it, they had the satisfaction of seeing that their efforts were successful. Mr. Chesney was once more master of himself.

"Mr. Edward," he said in a broken voice, "I am ready. If it please God to spare me until this villainous scheme has been defeated, I—I can submit to His will."

"Be of good courage!" Edward said, employing unconsciously, as he often did, the quaint biblical phraseology; "I feel confident that we shall succeed. What do you propose doing?"

"Your gig is at the door, is it not?" Mr. Chesney replied with a return of the old decided manner. "I shall go back with you to Tredhill, if you will allow me."

"At this late hour?" objected Edward, uneasily. "I do not think we should lose anything by postponing it until to-morrow," and Alice laid her hand beseechingly on his arm.

"To-morrow may be too late. You need not look so, my dear child! I am quite equal to whatever may be before me now. I cannot rest until I have seen ——," and, unable to complete his sentence, he left the room.

While he was absent, Edward briefly related to Alice the substance of Ellis's narrative, concluding with: "You see, Miss Chesney, there is no immediate cause for alarm. We have discovered it in time."

"God bless you!" said Alice, with overflowing eyes; adding, as a sudden thought struck her, "Mr. Edward! promise me that you will not leave my

father! This faintness might attack him again—and alone with that man—that dreadful man! what might not happen!”

“Rely upon me!” said Edward; and as Mr. Chesney entered ready for the journey, they started, leaving Alice to sit by the library fire until the grey streaks of the morning surprised her vigil.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FLIGHT.

THE night was cold and dark, and a fog, so thick that it was with difficulty they could see a yard before them, compelled them to proceed very warily, thus rendering the journey considerably longer than usual. For the first few miles the silence was unbroken, save by muttered ejaculations on the part of Mr. Chesney, who had again sunk into himself, and appeared to have forgotten that he was not alone. With true delicacy Edward scrupulously abstained from any remark, or even from any movement, that might serve to remind his companion of his presence, although the broken words that from time to time fell upon his ear made his heart bleed for the stricken man, revealing as they did the depths of the Rector's affection for the nephew who had acted so base a part.

"Oh, Tom! how could you—how could you deceive me so?" "Anything—anything rather than this." "Would to God he had died first!" "Robert, I have wronged you cruelly." "Oh, Tom! you have been a Judas—and *I!* my God, forgive me! lay

not this blood to my charge!" "Edward! Edward! I have done my best for your boy—you know I have!" "How can I give you up, Tom? I cannot—I *cannot*. Walter was taken—you came to me in his stead." "Oh, Lord! have pity! in wrath remember mercy! spare Robert—but oh! spare my boy! let me not be left desolate in my old age!" "Oh, Tom! Tom! Tom!" cried the Rector in a burst of agony, "*how* can I give you up?" And he bowed his head upon his hands, and appeared engaged in prayer.

Unworthy of his uncle's love, as Edward believed Captain Hawkesworth to be, the young missionary was not one to measure out his sympathy solely with regard to the greatness or the smallness of the cause whence the grief had sprung; still less could he sit calmly by, unmoved, apathetic, and gaze with curious eyes upon the spectacle of a human spirit struggling with a crushing sorrow. He knew that a man of Mr. Chesney's calibre is best left to buffet single-handed with affliction—that the deep-rooted oak has no need of the stake that helps to support the sapling; nevertheless, Edward could not remain speechless. He was also in trouble; he had experienced something of the storm that can make shipwreck of a steadfast soul; he had drunk, if but feebly, of the bitter cup; he, too, was acquainted with grief.

Suddenly there floated through the dark, misty

veil that encompassed them, the clear strong words of supplication :

"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me : for my soul trusteth in Thee : yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high ; unto God that performeth all things for me."

The Rector raised his head, and said, with an effort at calmness, "If it had been a stranger that had done this, I could have borne it ; but *he!* my boy, whom I have so loved, so gloried in ! I took him in, Mr. Edward ; I took him to my heart ; I warmed him and fed him ; and, now, he has turned upon me—he has stung me like an adder. If he had only done it openly—if he had only said, 'Uncle Stephen, you are an old fool ! I can play upon you as I like—I hate you ! I scorn you !'—it would have been nothing. But all the time—so loving to my face ! so honest, so frank, so outspoken—to all appearance ! I tell you, Edward, this is worse than death."

"Is it not possible that you may find Captain Hawkesworth less to blame in the matter than you imagine ?" suggested Edward, when Mr. Chesney's grief had spent itself. "It seems to me that this friend of his, this Clayton, is the originator of the whole scheme."

"What does it matter to me, now, whether Tom's guilt is *one* degree less black, or not ?" replied the

Rector, gloomily; and a silence ensued until they were made aware, by the clattering of the wheels on the stony streets, that they had entered the town.

"Mr. Chesney," said Edward, "if you have no objection, we will drive round by Ellis's before going on to the Terrace. It will not take us much out of our way, and his wife may be anxious about him. No one knows, except my father, that he is with me."

"Do as you please, Mr. Edward," said the Rector, absently.

A quarter of an hour's rapid driving brought them to the fisherman's cottage—a low, one-storied tenement on the outskirts of the town, a few minutes' walk from the sea. As the gig stopped, the door opened; and, to Edward's amazement, Mr. Tooke, senior, appeared.

"Father! you here? at this hour!" he exclaimed.

"Did you not get my message?" inquired the lawyer, in equal surprise, "your mother is waiting up to give you it now. I left word that you were to come here at once on your return home from Ilmington. Who is that with you?—Jack?"

"It is I, Mr. Tooke," said the Rector.

"Mr. Chesney!—if you are not the very individual I have been most devoutly wishing for! Never did you appear at a more opportune time. In fact, there is a messenger on the road to Ilmington now, to summon you here."

"What is the matter?" said Mr. Chesney, hurriedly; "has anything more been discovered in connection with this—this affair? I suppose you know all, Mr. Tooke?"

"I do," said the old lawyer, sadly; "but come in, Mr. Chesney, pray come in!—this is not a night for a cat to be exposed, let alone a human being."

Thus urged, the Rector and Edward alighted; and leaving Toby to be cared for by a lad who emerged from some outhouse at Mr. Tooke's call, they entered the kitchen. The bright glow of the fire on the hearth contrasted strongly with the darkness they had just quitted; and the comfortable appearance of the humble dwelling testified to Polly Ellis's possessing better qualities than even a tiny, neat little figure and a pair of red cheeks. Her roses seemed to have vanished, however, for she was very pale; and as she dropped her best curtsy to the Rector, and hastened to place chairs, she wiped away the traces of tears with her apron.

"What is the matter, Polly?" said Edward, kindly; "you are not anxious about Jack, I hope? It is my fault that he did not return when he promised. He is safe at the Rectory now, and will be with you before breakfast to-morrow morning."

"Thank you kindly, sir!" replied Polly, bursting into tears. "Mr. Tooke told me he's safe. But who knows how soon it will all come true? or

how soon my Jack 'll be a-lyin' there, a bleedin', drop by drop, t' death, an' his poor body one mass o' bruises?"

"What on earth do you mean, Polly?" exclaimed Edward, exchanging glances of perplexity with the Rector.

"Come, Mrs. Ellis!" interposed the lawyer; "I want you to tell Mr. Chesney exactly what you told me. He's a Justice of the Peace, you know, and bound to hear it."

"Don't ax me t' come over it again!" sobbed Polly, rocking herself to and fro; "I can't go through 't again. O Jack! Jack!"

"Polly!" said Edward, in a low voice, "Jack is alive and well. Put aside your fears for a little. Don't you see how ill Mr. Chesney is?"

Polly cast a sharp glance at the Rector: "Ay, poor gentleman, he *do* look bad!" she whispered.

The Rectory and its inmates were associated in her simple mind with the halcyon days of "courtin'," and the mental suffering so visibly depicted on her old master's countenance went to her heart. She wiped her eyes, and checked her sobs.

"Will you tell me what has happened, Mary?" said the Rector feebly, and Polly plunged into the following narrative:

"Well, you see, sir, I didn't know as my Jack had gone over t' Ilmington wi' Mr. Ed'ard here. W'en he left me, about half arter eight, he told me he war a-goin'

straight to t' beach, an' he promised t' be back afore ten, seein' as 'ow he'd only t' help wi' t' unloadin.' Well, sir, ten o'clock come, elivin come, an' no signs o' Jack; an' I began t' be kind o' narvish, bein' but poorly for some days past. It's t' fust time as iver Jack has broke his word t' me since we war married, an' I couldn't go t' bed an' sleep peaceable a-thinkin' an' a-worritin' about him. Well, sir, as I war a settin' here afore this very fire, I dropped right off int' a doze, wi'out meanin' it, an' I had t' orfullest dream as iver I had in my life;" and Polly flung her apron over her head, and began to sob afresh.

"The fact is, Mr. Chesney," interposed Mr. Tooke, "she dreamt that her husband had fallen over the cliffs."

"Ay, that did I!" said Polly, between her sobs, "walked over t' Sivin Sisters—t' littlest of 'em—in t' fog."

"The seven chalk cliffs, you know, Mr. Chesney, about a quarter of a mile from here."

"Yes, I know the spot well," replied the Rector. "Mrs. Ellis, you saw your husband lying there in this dream?"

"He war a-lyin' there, sir, jist as he had walked over in t' fog, on his back, wi' one leg doubled under him, an' a great gash on his dear face wi' t' blood drop, droppin' on t' rock. I see it as plain as I see you now, sir, an' I called t' him; an' there war

t' tide a-comin' up very slow, but very sure; an' I knew if I didn't git t' him, he'd be drowned. An' yit, try as I would, I couldn't git t' him. W' that I awoke wi' a cold shiver, an' found myself settin' here a-cryin' an' a-screechin' t' that degree that Susan Saunders (she's Jack's pardner's wife as lives nixt door), she come in thinkin' t' house war sure-ly afire. W'en I told her wot I'd seen, nat'rally she wouldn't b'lieve it, an' wanted for to make out as 'ow I'd had t' nightmare. Well, sir, she wint away, an' I set down agin, an' dreamed t' same dream a sekind time. I see t' very same place, an' Jack a-lyin' as I've told you, only whiter an' fainter like, as if t' blood war all a-goin', an' there war t' waves a-comin' up an' up, creepin' slow—an' they'd reached his very knees. I awoke agin, an' I rushed in t' Susan desp'rate-like, an' says: 'Susan,' says I, 'you may call 't night-mare, or any mare *you* please, but as sure as I'm a livin' ooman, my Jack's lyin' below t' Little Sister, a-watchin' for me, an' if you won't go wi' me t' look for him, I'll jist go alone.' 'Polly,' says Susan, "you've gone clean crazed!" but she's a kind-natered ooman is Susan, an' w'en she sees me detarmined for t' go, she put on her bonnet, an' we took t' lantern an' started. Well, sir, my dream wa'n't sent t' me for nothink. My *Jack* wa'n't there, but, sure enough! we found a man a-groanin' an' a-moanin' so as you'd niver forgit it if you'd heared it. We come back at once t' look for help,

for t' tide war very near him, an' Jem Saunders an' another, they fetched a stretcher an' brought him straight here, as is t' fust house, an' he a-hollerin' so an' a-cussin so as they war glad to be rid on him. He kep' mixin' up your name, sir, an' t' Capn's, an' Sir Robert as is in furrin' parts, an' callin' out for Mr. Ed'ard here like mad, so as Mr. Jones said he wouldn't hold out till mornin', we made bold t' send for Mr. Ed'ard" ——

"And got me instead," concluded Mr. Tooke; "I have allowed her to tell her story, Mr. Chesney, to prepare you for what you have no doubt guessed by this time. The person in question is the man to whom we owe all our present uneasiness—Clayton, your nephew's friend."

Mr. Chesney started, in extreme agitation, and proceeded towards the inner apartment.

"This is the finger of God;" he said, "let us go to him at once."

"Calm yourself, my dear sir!" cried Mr. Tooke, intercepting him before he reached the door. "He is insensible at present—in a state of coma. Mr. Jones, the parish doctor, is watching by him, and has promised to let us know the instant he recovers consciousness. He expects that there will be a lucid interval before death."

Mr. Chesney submitted to be led back to his chair, and Mr. Tooke continued,—

"Captain Hawkesworth will be here immediately ;

I sent a message as if from Clayton himself—so that he will not fail to come.”

Silence fell upon the group. Polly retired to some other part of the house, and the three awaited with breathless anxiety the summons to the room where the dying man lay.

Half an hour had passed in this manner, when Mr. Chesney said :

“Tom is long in coming, is he not?”

“He may be away from home,” suggested Mr. Tooke; and at the same moment the sound of a hoarse voice was heard in the inner room, followed by the opening of the door.

“Has Mr. Edward come?” said the surgeon, a stout, red-faced man. “Ah!” he said, on perceiving the young missionary; “my patient is sensible now, and asking earnestly for you. He has evidently something on his mind, but you will have to get it from him without delay—he has not many minutes to live.”

On the bed in the adjoining room lay Bully, with face so scarred and distorted that it was with difficulty he could be recognised; his breathing was heavy and laboured, his eye bloodshot and excited.

As it happened, Mr. Chesney was the first to enter. No sooner did Clayton perceive him than he uttered a fearful oath, and attempted to leap out of bed. The pain attendant on this seemed to be

excruciating, for he closed his eyes and sank back on his pillow with a deep moan.

"My dear sir!" expostulated the surgeon, as he administered a reviving cordial, "I have told you that your only chance of life is in keeping perfectly still."

"Why did you bring *him* in here, then?" said Clayton, fiercely; "I won't have him here—I won't have none of your pretentious clergy, as is no better than myself. I'll have Edward Tooke, or none at all! I've got somethink to tell, but devil a soul shall hear it except him!"

The surgeon hastily signed to the old lawyer and Mr. Chesney to withdraw out of sight, behind the bed. Edward advanced, and took the dying man's hand.

"Mr. Clayton," he said, with the simple kindness that was natural to him, "it grieves me much to find you lying here. Are you very badly hurt?"

"I'll never rise from *this* bed!" returned Clayton, emphatically; "but never mind my body! that's Jones's business. Mr. Edward, I never sent for one of your cloth before. I don't believe in parsons, but I *do* believe in *you*. But mind! you've not come here to dose me with Bible physic, and worry the last spark of life out o' me! I know very well I'm bound straight for hell, and all I ask of you is to let me go there in peace."

"Mr. Clayton," Edward replied, with some emotion,

"I am here as the minister of Jesus Christ, to offer you salvation, even at the last moment, through His blood. But before you can venture to hope for mercy, you must repent—you must confess, and disburden your soul of all known sin."

"How dare you talk to me like this?" shrieked Bully, gnashing his teeth in impotent rage. "If you had met me in my own way, I'd have told you some—think that you'd all give your ears to know—but I'll cheat you out of it now. What d'ye mean by telling me to repent? Do you think to terrify me? I tell you anythink *you* know of is nothing to the torments I've suffered already!"

"Time is passing," Edward continued, with apparent calmness; "do not go to meet an offended God with words like those on your lips. Repair the mischief you have done! Mr. Clayton!" he added, in a low voice; "where is Sir Robert Chesney?"

The wretched man started, and great clammy drops stood on his brow.

"What do I know about Sir Robert?" he faltered.

"Do not go to the grave with innocent blood on your hands!" said Edward mournfully, while his eyes filled with tears. "I beseech you by the mercies of Christ, that you do not turn a deaf ear to what I say! This poor boy will be killed—murdered—through you—unless you at once disclose to me all you know of this scheme."

A dead silence succeeded. Edward saw with

trembling anxiety that Clayton's life was fast ebbing. Oh! if he would but confess!

When Bully spoke again it was with the greatest difficulty—his bravado courage had departed with his strength.

"Mr. Edward! as you say—I am a dying man. In my desk—at the Terrace—you'll find a paper—in my handwriting—an account of all the transactions between Tom and me. I had it ready, lest he should play me false. He has deceived every one else—how did I know that he would not do the same by me? Oh, Mr. Edward!" he continued, in extreme agitation, "I'm dying—I'm dying! Is there no hope for a wretch like me?"

"Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out," repeated Edward, earnestly. "'The Lord is merciful and gracious—long suffering, and slow to anger'—but, oh! I adjure you—do not hasten into His presence with any sin unrepented of! I may be wrong—but you will forgive me if I am—had you anything to do with the murder of Mr. Penton, twenty-two years ago—Lady Charleswood's first husband?"

Again the agonized expression passed over Clayton's face.

"God be merciful!" he gasped. "I did it—alone!"

Edward drew out his pocket-book without a moment's delay, and wrote the following words:—

"I, James Clayton, formerly known as Jabez Hill, do hereby acknowledge and confess, that I alone am guilty of the murder of Richard Penton, of Penton's Hill."

And placing the pen in the dying man's hand, he urged him to append his name to the document.

Too late! the stiffened fingers relaxed their grasp before the first letter had been formed—the glassy eye became fixed and rigid—and the convulsive throes, succeeded by a perfect stillness, announced that all was over.

Edward threw himself on his knees, and cried aloud,—

"Oh, Lord! Thou knowest what this man's life has been. Thou seest not as we see. Thy knowledge is too deep for us. If it be possible, receive his soul! Blessed Jesus! Thou who didst succour the dying thief at the eleventh hour—have mercy! If there was any penitence in his dark soul—if he did but look *once* to Thee—save him, Lord! Regard not his idle words. Be pitiful, be merciful!" and Edward's head sank upon the bed in wordless, agonized entreaty for what seemed to him a lost spirit.

The others came silently forward, and stood around, gazing with mingled awe and pity at the ghastly, mangled corpse.

Suddenly the door was pushed open, and Captain Hawkesworth entered. He stood for a moment spell-

bound. His uncle turned, and looked at him with a sadness pathetic in its quiet dignity.

"Tom," he said, pointing to the bed; "is this your work?"

Captain Hawkesworth started—advanced a few paces; the familiar features, distorted in death, met his glance; and, with the cry of a wild animal stricken down, brought to bay, he turned and fled.

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN WHICH MR. TOOKE ASTONISHES EVERYBODY, AND ENDS
BY BEING MORE THAN ASTONISHED HIMSELF.

THE reader will now be at no loss to account for the phenomenon with which our last book closed—the appearance of Mr. Tooke and his son in Arnold's house. Edward accompanied the Rector as interpreter and peace-maker. In his last visit to England, Robert had evinced a decided liking for the young missionary, and Mr. Chesney deemed it best that the first overtures should be negotiated by him. Mr. Tooke, senior, had joined them, partly because he fancied that his legal sagacity might possibly be of use, partly because he had a little private business on hand, which could only be accomplished in Germany and by himself, but regarding which he was inexorably silent, and even mysterious. Edward had his own suspicions as to what the affair might be; but, indeed, they were all so deeply interested in the fate of the young Baronet, that his father's proposal to be one of the party had not surprised him.

Arriving in Städtlein late on the evening of the twenty-sixth, Mr. Chesney remained at his hotel, while his coadjutors proceeded to Dr. Frank's, where they heard from the doctor's wife the information that had been given to Arnold in the morning. We may now take up the thread of our story.

On perceiving that neither of the two who had so unexpectedly arrived was the object of his search, Franz paused for a moment in uncertainty, and then, making a sudden dash at the door, gained the street before Arnold had time to intercept him. "Mother," said Arnold, in a low voice, "I must leave these gentlemen to you for a few minutes. I shall be back directly," and he also quitted the house, to the astonishment of the strangers, who remained standing in the entrance-hall perplexed and bewildered.

Overtaking the maddened youth before he had reached the end of the street, Arnold caught him by the arm: "Franz," he cried, "stay! I know something of Dida."

The young man stopped. "Why did you not say so before? You told me that you knew nothing of them."

"That I knew nothing of Sir Robert," corrected Arnold; "but I have seen Dida since I saw him. Calm yourself, and listen."

"No, I will not," cried Franz, struggling to extricate himself from the grasp in which he was held. "This is only a pretext to hinder me from going to

the town hall ; but I will go. I *will* go, I tell you, in spite of you."

"Franz, this is no pretext. I am in earnest. To prove it, let us both go to the hall together. If he is there, I will bring him out to you myself."

They were standing beneath a lamp. Franz glanced scrutinizingly at his companion. The result of his inspection seemed to satisfy him. "You *look* honest," he muttered, and suffered himself to be conducted to the hall, where the bright lights, the sound of music within, and the crowd gathered round the entrance, proved that the gaiety was at its height. Arnold described the young Baronet and his costume (the details of which he had learned from Director von Holz) to the door-keepers; but as he expected, no such person had been seen by them. Robert had not been there.

"Now, you see, I have told you the truth," he said, as they turned away. "My own belief is that Dida is not with Sir Robert," and he related the occurrence of the afternoon. His account of the girl's strange companions' arrested the attention of Franz, and seemed to put his suspicions upon a new scent.

"They were rough-looking, rather fierce, wild, and dark, you say?" he remarked, thoughtfully. "What if they are some of her own people—gipsy-folk!"

"I should not be at all surprised," said Arnold, to whom the same idea had suggested itself. "It is

quite probable that there may be a tribe of them in the neighbourhood. Carnival is just the time when they might expect to reap a harvest."

"Herr Müller!" said Franz, stopping abruptly, "you are right. Dida is not with the Englishman. She has told me over and over again, that if she ever came across her own people, she could not keep from joining them. Depend upon it, she is with them; it's her nature to fancy she would like their free, roving life, though I doubt if it would suit her now. But she's off to try it; I am convinced of that. I will lose not another minute in finding out if such a band has been seen near the town. They don't go by ones or twos."

"One moment, Franz," exclaimed Arnold, as he turned to go; "has Dida no friends in town? Has your father no relations here?"

"Yes; but they could only tell me that she had gone out alone very early in the morning, and not returned."

"But if she means to go away altogether, don't you think it possible that she may have gone back to them, to tell them of it—to say good bye?"

Franz shook his head. "I don't think it's likely. Dida never took to them. But it's just possible, so I'll inquire at the market place first."

"Franz," said Arnold, as he turned away, "I have helped you to find Dida. In return, promise me one thing; if you learn from her where Sir Robert is, you

will come and tell me first, before seeking him out?"

"If I find Dida," answered Franz, gloomily, "I shall be everlastingly indebted to you, Herr Müller, for saving her from disgrace—but she will never be to me what she once was—Sir Robert and I have some words to say to each other, and no man shall come between us," and striking down a side-lane he was soon out of sight.

On returning home, Arnold was not a little relieved to discover that Mr. Chesney had arrived, and also that he was in communication with the owners of the "Germania." During his absence, his mother had informed her visitors of all she knew regarding Robert, and Arnold at once proposed to accompany them to the hotel. During the short walk thither, he could plainly see that Mr. Tooke senior's sense of propriety was terribly shocked by the appearance of the town, which he declared to be "a scandalous upsetting of nature—a turning of night into day," and he returned the merry greetings of the masqueraders who accosted them, with glances so expressive of contemptuous indignation, that Arnold was in momentary dread of their being embroiled in some squabble, and felt heartily glad to be once more under shelter.

They found Mr. Chesney pacing the long *salon* with indescribable impatience. Perceiving that a third individual accompanied his friends, he advanced

in visible agitation to meet them ; but on discovering the new-comer to be a stranger, his look of expectation changed into one of disappointment.

"Then you have not found him?" he moaned.

"This gentleman, Herr Müller, is a friend of his," returned Edward ; "he kindly consented to come with us, that he might tell you all that is to be known about Sir Robert."

"You are greatly altered since I last saw you, Herr Müller," said the Rector, extending his hand ; "we seem fated to meet each other under sad auspices. The first time we came together was the day that deprived me of my poor boy ; and now, I am again in trouble."

Arnold was much affected by the heart-broken, despairing expression of the countenance he remembered so well as stamped with the impress of a proud vigour, and he said sorrowfully, "I regret that what I have to tell will not help you much in finding my poor friend."

"It may be of more service than you imagine," said Mr. Chesney, motioning him to a chair ; "you will confer a great favour upon me by putting me in possession of all you know."

Arnold complied with the request. Beginning with the day after Robert's return from England, he related in succession the conversation on the river, the introduction to Dida, the several interviews they had had during the winter, the recognition in the

street, the alarm, and finally the instructions he had given to the railway officials.

"You have done well," said the Rector, who had listened to the narrative with conflicting emotions, and had been almost overcome by the undreamt-of complication now introduced in the person of Dida : "you have acted the part of a brother to this poor, misguided boy, and I owe you my warmest thanks. What course would you recommend, gentlemen?" he added, after a pause. "I presume we can do nothing more before morning; so long as this folly continues we shall get no one to attend to us."

"Yes!" replied Mr. Tooke, decidedly, striking his umbrella with unusual emphasis on the floor, "there is something we may do before morning. Mr. Muller here says the last time he saw Sir Robert was just before the alarm with the horses; is it not possible that he may have been injured in some way then? That in trying to rescue this girl he may have met with an accident? I can account for his disappearance in no other way, as it is perfectly clear he intended to throw us all off the scent by showing face at the ball. If he is not at this very moment kept in Städtlein by a broken arm, or something of that sort, I'm a blind beetle."

Arnold started. Robert had hitherto been present to his imagination hale and hearty, alert and active, bent only upon scheming to leave the town—Robert stricken down, bruised, and wounded, had never

once occurred to his thoughts. And yet this supposition now took the form of certainty, for there flashed upon him the recollection of the spot where he had last seen the Baronet standing—at the head of a flight of steps leading down to an underground store. Could it be possible that in the swaying and surging of the crowd he had been violently thrown down—perhaps trodden upon? “Why did I not think of this before?” he cried, springing to his feet. “My poor Robert! let us go to the hospital! if he was injured, he would be carried there at once,” and without a moment’s delay the whole party, including Mr. Chesney, set out. At any ordinary time this coming and going in the dead of night would not have passed without observation, but no one paid the slightest heed to them, or watched their movements with any degree of curiosity—unless, indeed, it was to wonder at the contrast between their anxious looks and the prevailing noisy mirth.

As they passed the town hall, Arnold saw Lucien handing Mala and her aunt into their carriage. He fancied that both ladies seemed depressed and dull; and, associating this with the subject uppermost in his mind, he immediately began to conjecture that Franz had returned to the hall after all, and made a scene by attempting to put his threat into execution; but he could not stay to inquire into this—if it had occurred, the mischief was done.

After what appeared to Mr. Chesney an interminable walk they arrived at the hospital, and discovered to their heartfelt relief that Mr. Tooke's penetration had not been at fault. Robert had been brought there early in the day insensible, his left leg broken, and otherwise more or less hurt.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mr. Chesney, fervently. The courteous superintendent who had given the information looked somewhat astonished at this way of receiving sad tidings, and the Rector concluded, hastily, "that he is not killed!" and begged that they might be allowed to see him.

The superintendent hesitated: "It is quite against rule," he said, "at this hour, but I think I may venture to make an exception in your case, especially as we have been to blame in not communicating with you earlier; but we have not had a moment's leisure; the number of casualties far exceed the average occurrences of the kind at Carnival."

He then led the way to a large ward, scrupulously neat and clean, where, under the gentle guardianship of a Sister of Charity, Robert lay, alternately moaning and wandering in delirium. The tears ran down Mr. Chesney's face at the sight of his nephew, and his emotion was shared by the silent bystanders.

"The fever is at its height," said the Sister, as she moistened his lips with water; "he is very much excited," and the ravings of the sufferer confirmed what she said. Dida, his uncle, Tom, the projected

journey—coursed successively through his heated brain; now he fancied himself on board ship; again, some one was trying to prevent his leaving Städtlein, holding him back by main force; his uncle was cruel—unjust; all the world was in league against him.

“Sir!” said the surgeon, humanely (he guessed that Mr. Chesney was the uncle in question), “I must now ask you to withdraw. I have already exceeded my duty in allowing you to remain so long. Be assured that he will be well taken care of, and do not be too uneasy. The fracture is a bad one, but he has youth on his side, and sister Theresa is the best of nurses.”

Mr. Chesney murmured a few words of gratitude; but he was too much overcome to understand well what was addressed to him, and suffered himself to be taken back to the hotel. Here he was induced to take a little necessary refreshment, and to retire to rest. In a short time anxiety yielded to exhaustion, and he fell into a deep slumber. Relieved of immediate dread, Mr. Tooke and Edward followed his example, and Arnold went home to recount to his mother all that had taken place.

Early next morning, before he was well awake, he was startled by an unfamiliar voice at his bedside: “Herr Müller!” it cried with eager haste, “I have found her! I have found her! She may yet be mine!”

Arnold with difficulty collected his scattered thoughts, and applying the pronoun to Dida, became aware that it was Franz who stood by him—not the wild, despairing Franz of the preceding evening, but the young gardener whom he had first known, with the same simple expression, the same broad face beaming into a smile. “You have found Dida?” Arnold repeated, “with your relations?”

“Yes! she had just returned from Eckhardt; she had been to say to my father, to us all—adieu! It is as I thought, Herr Müller, she is determined to go with her own kinsfolk. The tall woman with whom you saw her is her mother (she recognised Dida by the necklace), and the man is her father. They don’t want her to join the tribe; they would rather she remained with us, where they could see her every year as they pass this way; but Dida is positive, she *will* go, she will try the free life, and so I have made up my mind to follow her.”

“What!” exclaimed Arnold, amazed; “*you*—brought up as you have been, mean to attach yourself to these wild, lawless people! Do you know how they live? Do you know that their hand is against every man, and every man’s hand against them?”

“I know it,” returned Franz, gloomily, “but it is my only chance of securing Dida. I have a little money saved—not much, it is true; but sufficient to provide help for my father while I am away, and to

enable me to live honestly for the few months it will last. I know Dida, Herr Müller; I know she will soon tire of this freak, but she will never settle until she has tried it. She is not like us townspeople, you know."

"But what about Sir Robert?" Arnold said, with some hesitation.

"My aunt says (and Dida has confided in her a goodish bit) that she don't believe Dida cares for him in her heart, as she does for me. You see, Herr Müller, we have grown up together, so it's natural she should cling most to me. She was to have gone to foreign parts with him, across the sea, *as his sister*, and they were to have been married when they got to their journey's end. But since he deserted her yesterday in the street, she has turned quite against him, and thinks he has been only making a fool of her, with his fine promises; and now he is off by himself, and has left her to make her peace with us as best she may. But Dida will find that she is *not* alone—she has one arm still to lean upon," continued Franz, his honest face kindling with the warmth of his feeling; "so long as I have health and strength she shall never want for bite or sup!"

Arnold rejoiced mentally at the unexpected turn affairs had taken, but he took care not to undeceive the young man with regard to Robert's real fate, since the thought of her lover stretched upon a bed

of pain might probably have a pacifying effect (not at all to be desired under the circumstances) on the girl's wounded pride; and to his great relief Franz did not press him on the subject. In fact, so engrossed was he by his love, and the sacrifice he was about to make for Dida, that the Englishman and revenge appeared to have passed entirely from his thoughts.

"You have my best wishes for your success, Franz!" said Arnold, extending his hand; "how long do you think you will be away?"

"That depends!" replied Franz, with a profound shake of the head; "but you need not be surprised if you see us return man and wife before the summer."

"Amen!" said Arnold, and with a light step and bright hope Franz took his departure.

It was with no small pleasure that Arnold hastened to communicate this intelligence to Mr. Chesney, whom he found greatly restored by the few hours' sleep—the only rest he had enjoyed since the first warning of the impending danger had been brought to him in the library at Ilmington.

"Thank God that one temptation is removed out of Robert's way!" he exclaimed; "let us hope that there may be no more blame attachable to him, than this young man's story would seem to imply."

On inquiring at the hospital, the accounts of

Robert proved most favourable; the fever had partially subsided, and his condition on the whole was satisfactory; but admission to him was peremptorily refused by the authorities for a few days, as any excitement might throw him back. Under these circumstances, and considering that Arnold was at hand to take his place, Edward proposed returning to England without delay: there were his own duties and the Rector's to be performed, and although neighbouring clergymen had not been wanting in offers of assistance, he did not feel justified in remaining longer away. Mr. Tooke, senior, also announced himself ready to go home. His mission was satisfactorily accomplished, and the nature of it he finally disclosed in a few brief words addressed to Mr. Chesney as they stood together on the platform, awaiting the train that was to bring to a conclusion the lawyer's first and last continental experiences.

"Mr. Chesney," he began abruptly, "you have lost one nephew. What will you give me if I find you another?"

"I do not think you should recommend any more nephews to me, Mr. Tooke," returned the Rector.

"My nephew will be one of the right sort," persisted Mr. Tooke, "and there he is at your right hand!"

The events of the last few days had been sufficiently startling to deaden whatever faculty of

astonishment the Rector ever possessed, but it was with no slight bewilderment that he turned to Arnold: "Impossible! Mr. Tooke, you are dreaming!"

"Better call me a blind beetle at once!" retorted Mr. Tooke in an aggrieved tone. "Am I given to making statements that I can't prove, Mr. Chesney?"

"Arnold Müller my nephew!" continued the Rector —

"The Rev. Stephen Chesney my uncle!" said Arnold laughing, as he handed the Rector the card he had given him on the eventful morning of their first meeting; "you little thought when you gave me this, that we were connected by a stronger tie than the mere accident which brought us together! *I* am not at all surprised by Mr. Tooke's discovery; poor Robert paved the way to it—he always used to insist upon the resemblance between my mother and his father."

"And not only that!" assented Mr. Tooke, pushing his wig back regardless of consequences, "but I have proof positive—Mrs. Muller has in her possession the counterpart of the locket that belonged to the late Mrs. Hawkesworth. You recollect, Mr. Chesney, when we were looking over the poor lady's jewels, you pointed it out to me particularly, and mentioned that she had told you once of the existence of one exactly similar, containing a lock of Lady

Chesney's hair, which her mother had given to Miss Kate the same day she got hers? Here it is!" and Mr. Tooke triumphantly produced a little, old-fashioned gold locket, which Mr. Chesney instantly recognised as identical with that his sister Jenny, the Captain's mother, had left to Alice. But one short week before, what a painful, mortifying disclosure would this have been to him! Now, the alteration which had taken place in his feelings was such, that to say he was *pleased* merely by the discovery would be to underrate his real gratification.

During his short intercourse with Arnold, there had sprung up a mutual liking between them—Arnold's frankness had gained the Rector's esteem; and his affection for Robert, and undemonstrative sympathy for himself, had fairly won his heart; therefore, it was with sincere, undisguised cordiality that he welcomed his new relative, while Arnold, on his part, was equally glad to find the pleasant fiction, with which Robert and he had often amused themselves, assume the form of reality.

"Mr. Tooke," said the Rector, when the excitement had subsided, "you ought to be Lord Chancellor! You restored one nephew to me; now you have given me another! but tell me, what led you to think of Arnold in connection with our family?"

"Some remarks of Sir Robert's," replied the Man

in Spectacles, modestly; "he mentioned the striking likeness between Mrs. Muller and the late Sir Edward, and of course, I began to turn it over in my own mind, and wonder if the lady could be either poor Miss Kate herself, or perhaps a daughter. I don't know that I would have thought it worth while to investigate the matter, Mr. Chesney, if it had not been for recent circumstances. But I was *de-tarmined* that Mr. Tom should reap no benefit from his wickedness. I vowed that I'd outwit him, and I've done it! If the present Baronet should not live to come into possession, here is the rightful heir. God grant this may never come to pass! (no disparagement to you, Mr. Muller! 'tis natural we should all look to Sir Robert); but if it does, I apprehend no difficulty in making out a clear case, and proving the identity of Mrs. Muller's mother as Sir Ralph's elder daughter, beyond a doubt!"

The warning-bell rang—the Rector had only time to grasp his old friend by the hand, with a hasty "God reward you, and Edward too, Mr. Tooke! you have stood by me in my trouble."

They were gone, and the new-made uncle and nephew remained upon the platform until the train was out of sight.

"There now, Ned!" said Mr. Tooke, ensconcing himself in the most comfortable corner, "I've done my best for you. If you don't go in and win Miss

Alice after all this, you are the most ungrateful scamp on the face of the earth."

"Father!" said Edward, "I have asked Miss Chesney already—and she refused me."

!!! . . . We are glad to find that our limited space forbids any attempt at disentangling the web of Mr. Tooke's conflicting emotions.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RECONCILIATION.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Chesney awaited the moment for meeting his nephew with exceeding impatience, time did not hang heavily on his hands. He learned to know his new relatives, made acquaintance with the Director, and before the lapse of many days began to perceive that beyond the line of frigid formality which had hitherto bounded his horizon, there lay unsuspected interests throbbing with life, pulsating with a new and fresh charm—that he had been dwelling in the valley, while high above towered a mount of vision, whence the world stretched itself out to the wondering gaze in grander features and brighter colours; the Rector, in short, was slowly beginning to awake to the fact, that a *sympathetic* is better than a *self-concentrated* existence.

At length, the surgical embargo was removed; the fever had entirely subsided; and although still **very** weak, Robert was mending rapidly, and might **safely** be allowed to receive visitors. On the day **fixed**, Mr. Chesney and Arnold entered the long **room** with trembling eagerness; the former remained a

few paces off, where Robert could not see him, and Arnold alone advanced to the bedside. In the pale face and wasted form that met his wistful gaze, he had some difficulty in recognising the merry Robert of a few months before, and even the half-sad smile with which he was received proved that the mind had suffered with the body.

"Are you not ashamed to come near me?" he said, as he returned Arnold's grasp with emotion, "after leaving me alone here for weeks together!"

"I have been here regularly every day—sometimes twice or thrice—to inquire for you, and begged and prayed to be allowed to get a peep at you—to no purpose!—Dear old boy!" he continued, with the expression that Robert had taught him, "how I am longing to get my torment beside me again!"

A shade crossed Robert's face: "I don't think I shall ever get better," he said with a sigh; "I have hardly strength to lift my hand from my side, and they say my leg will never be quite right. I shall be a sort of cripple, hobbling about all my life—if I live."

"You must expect to feel weak for a short time," replied Arnold, cheerfully; "the doctors say you are getting on famously—we shall see you walking about as well as ever in a month or two."

Robert shook his head: "I have been a great fool. I suppose this is what old Jean would call a 'judgment' on me. I have brought it upon

myself—there is no denying that. Do you know, Arnold, I often feel as if all that has happened since I came back from England was a dream—as if I had been labouring under some horrible nightmare.—You have discovered all my fine schemes?”

“Well, yes!” said Arnold, hesitating as to the judiciousness of entering upon so exciting a topic; “you must not ask too many questions to-day. I will tell you all, when you are a little stronger. In the meantime, you must be content with my assurance that everything has turned out for the best. This broken limb has saved you from a much worse fate. So thank God, and get strong!”

“But Dida?” said Robert eagerly.

“—— is well” ——

“My uncle!—does he know?”

“Mr. Chesney is here,” said Arnold quietly; “he has discovered his mistake with regard to you.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Robert, with a pleased smile, “he has found out old Frank then? I am glad of that!—Did you say the Rector was in Städtlein? I should like to see him once more—I should like to part friends. I believe he really meant well by me all the while.”

Mr. Chesney could restrain himself no longer; he hurriedly left his ambush, and took Robert’s hand; but the sight of the change wrought in the young man by the few weeks’ illness unnerved him, and he could not utter a word.

Robert, on his part, was not less affected by the alteration in his uncle; the recent anxiety had completely blanched the grey hair, and bent the upright figure: "My dear uncle!" said the lad, as his eyes filled with tears, "it is I who have done this! You have suffered on my account!"

"Let us both try to forget the past, Robert," said Mr. Chesney, "and be more to each other in the future than we have ever been. I have acted harshly, unjustly towards you, Robert; but when you know all, perhaps you will think less hardly of me than I deserve."

"What you say about yourself is an enigma to me," returned the young Baronet, as he grasped his uncle's hand. "I have never been anything but a worthless fellow all my life; but if I am spared to rise from this, I hope to make amends for everything."

"First of all, make amends to yourself by getting well as fast as possible! Many strange things have taken place within the last few weeks. One of them you *must* hear now, in spite of the doctors, and that is——"

"That you have found another nephew?" concluded Robert, looking with beaming eyes at Arnold. "Isn't he a fine fellow, uncle Stephen? I knew that, directly you got to know him, you would not be content until you had made out a claim to him!"

"I fear I have no merit in the discovery," replied

Mr. Chesney, smiling ; " we have to thank Mr. Tooke for it."

" Mr. Tooke ! " exclaimed Robert ; " has he been over here too ? What an excitement about a good-for-nothing *ne'er-do-weel* ! And Tom ?—is he here ? "

" No," said the Rector, shortly, and hailed the reappearance of the Sister who came to warn them that their time had expired.

In subsequent conversations, Mr. Chesney elicited from his nephew, by slow degrees, the whole history already known to our readers : the specious representations of Captain Hawkesworth and his coadjutor ; Robert's determination to go abroad ; the intercourse with Dida :

" On my honour, uncle Stephen ! " said the young man earnestly, " beyond promising to make her my wife, I have done the girl no harm. She is as free to marry Franz, as if I had never crossed her path. Do you think I am bound to fulfil my engagement to her ? "

" I do not think she would accept you now," Mr. Chesney replied, as with a heart lightened of a lingering doubt that had haunted him in spite of Dida's protestation to her aunt, he briefly related what had taken place.

" Uncle," said Robert, when he had finished, " if she marries Franz, we must assist them to emigrate. They are both of the right stuff to get on in the new country. Dida has the spirit and energy of half-a-

dozen men," and the Rector willingly agreed to lend his co-operation in this plan.

When Robert was able to be removed to Dr. Frank's, Mr. Chesney made a hasty journey to England to bring his daughter over, that she might assist in nursing the invalid. Robert had manifested a strong desire to have her with him, but by a contradiction curious enough, no sooner was this wish gratified, than he suddenly declared himself so far restored as to be able to dispense with her services almost entirely.

"No, indeed!" he would say, when Alice remonstrated with him. "There is the old lady at hand, if I should want anything. You must go out and enjoy this lovely weather," and by some means or other, she found herself taking long walks every day—now to see one lion, now another; and on each occasion her companion was Arnold, whom Robert had cajoled into doing what he asked him by piteous representations of the shock sustained by Miss Chesney's nerves through recent events, and the necessity for her having restorative exercise. But to tell the truth, very little persuasion was required to induce Arnold to devote himself to his fair cousin—he was not so hardened by the world, or so soured by disappointment as to look back with any feeling save that of pleasure on their first meeting.

In the evening, the general rendezvous was by the couch of the invalid, who never seemed so thoroughly

at his ease, or so much like his old self, as when Alice was listening intently to Arnold's playing, or singing one of his songs. In short, the amusement by which the young Baronet sought to while away the tedious hours of convalescence, was that of *match-making*; and if anybody saw through his manœuvres no steps were taken to checkmate them, the result being that he played his little game triumphantly to the end, and won his queen—if not for himself, at least for his friend. But this is premature.

Notwithstanding the tender care bestowed upon him, however, Robert gained strength so slowly, that the physicians urged upon Mr. Chesney the absolute necessity of change of scene for him, and recommended a long sea-voyage, as the best means of gaining "a maximum of health with a minimum of fatigue"; but when this plan was mentioned to the invalid, he positively refused to go, unless Arnold promised to accompany him. In vain Arnold pointed out the position in which he was placed, the difficulty of finding any one properly qualified to undertake his duties during his absence. Robert would not yield: either he would go with Arnold, or not at all; and the effects of Arnold's continued opposition began at length to prove so hurtful to him, that Mr. Chesney and Alice brought all their powers of persuasion to bear upon the young man, and even the Director urged him to comply with the general request.

"You ought to go, Arnold," he said, one evening, when his secretary had been more than usually hard pressed by his English friends, and had come to him in despair for his final opinion. "Robert clings to you more than to his uncle, and in his present shattered state, with his latent tendency to decline, he must be humoured, at any cost. This may be the turning-point in his life. Besides, the voyage will do you good. You have never been quite yourself since—since Lucien came among us; the change of scene will drive away dull thoughts, and you will come back to us a new man. Yes! I decidedly think you ought to go!"

"But, dear Herr Bergmann!" remonstrated Arnold, "what will become of you? You will miss me very much, I fear. And then, my classes?"

"I will provide for them, Arnold. If the Committee consent to give you a six-months' furlough, the rest is easily managed. Mr. Chesney is most munificent in his offers regarding your substitute here. As for myself—well! I am selfish enough to wish you were not going. I shall lose my right hand in you."

"Dear Director, I do not see how I can leave you. Robert has his uncle and Alice—you have no one but me. If Wallraf were here, it would be a different matter. No, I cannot go!"

"But you *must* go!" said Herr Bergmann hastily; "what are my whims and fancies in comparison to

that poor young fellow's life!—and, after all, what is a six-months' separation! If it please God, we shall meet again, and have many happy years together. And if not, Arnold, you will have the consolation of knowing that you have done your duty; and I—if anything happens to me, Arnold, I know that you will take care of Mala."

Arnold was much struck by a certain undefinable, foreboding sadness more apparent in the Director's manner than in his words, and it cost him many painful efforts before he could finally resolve upon following his advice.—The summer was fast approaching—the season when his old friend's health was, in general, good; he would be back before the winter set in—yes, he would devote himself for the short time to his cousin. His decision was made known, and Robert's gratitude and pleasure knew no bounds. With the least possible delay the necessary preparations were made, the farewells exchanged, and the two young men left Hamburg in a sailing vessel for a three months' voyage to the Antipodes.

Book the Eighth.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

NEWS FROM HOME.

It is again September. Seven months have elapsed since we visited Ilmington. Then, a cloud of gloom and apprehension hung over the old Rectory; now, all is activity and gaiety. The Place, silent and deserted for years, has echoed for weeks past to the clang of hammers and the hum of many footsteps; it has been invaded by an army of carpenters and upholsterers, now deposed by Mrs. Marsden. The good lady is in her element, bustling about like a young girl, scolding her half-dozen housemaids, and interrupting this congenial process, ever and anon, by sudden darts into her own room, where she indulges unseen in the luxury of a "guid greet;" for the aspect of affairs reminds her forcibly of "auld times," and she recollects, as if it had been but yesterday, Sir Edward's coming of age, and her own great exertions on that occasion, when "her John" had been by her side to lighten them.

Nor is the excitement confined solely to the Place and the Rectory. In the village, the festal preparations are on the most magnificent scale.

Triumphal arches have been erected at regular intervals from the spot where the Chesney domains begin—half-way to Tredhill—up to the very door of the House. The Christmas emblems wherewith Miss Spry and her flock are wont to decorate the old church, fade into insignificance in comparison with the elaborate garlands, huge Welcomes, and cunningly-intertwined "R.C."s, which have cost them so many bleeding fingers lately, and now meet the eye at every turning—on the church-wall, just where the carriage will pass, on the cottages, the school-house, the sign-posts even. The Chesney Arms, of course, makes a striking display of loyalty to the Family in gay flags waving from every window. The banquetting-hall at the Place is a sight to be seen, with its evergreens and tapestries, for the grand dinner to the better-class tenants is to be given there. Sir Robert has written home that no expense is to be spared ; bonfires are to crackle on all sides, ale to flow *ad libitum*, plum-puddings to pop out of a Fortunatus' pot, replenished in some way as fast as it gets empty ; nay, it is even whispered that the traditional ox is to be roasted whole, and the entire population of Ilmington fêted *en masse* in the park at the Place. However, the programme for the great event is not yet complete, Sir Robert has still to be consulted ; and moreover, he is to be allowed a couple of days' grace to recruit after his journey, before entering upon the arduous task of entertaining half the county ; and

in the meantime, public curiosity is on the *qui vive* to welcome the young Baronet after his severe illness, and his newly-found cousin, the grandson of poor "Miss Kate," whom Mrs. Marsden and several septuagenarians still remember so well.

Punctually at half-past six, on the evening when the travellers are expected home, the huge bonfire on the Church Hill is lit, and may be seen, a glowing beacon, for miles around ; while old Timothy Sykes begins to pull the bell-rope with such joyful alacrity, and reiterates so many "Come, come, come!"s, one after the other, without the customary pause between, that his daughter-in-law fears he has gone "clean crazed," and rushes in hastily with a jug of ale for him, spilling more than half on the sacred floor, in her eagerness to get to him before his old energies are totally exhausted. She has barely time to run back to her place inside her own porch, when a confused murmur on all sides announces the looked-for arrival. "T'Squire! t'Squire!" "They're a comin'!" "Eh! but I wouldn't a known him! so stout an' brown as he's got!" ejaculations which are speedily changed into tremendous cheering and hurrahing, as the carriage drives past with the two gentlemen in it. Robert is, as old Betty remarks, greatly changed ; he has developed from the boy into the man, and returns the many greetings showered upon him in an honest, hearty fashion that captivates all hearts. Not a woman in the village but instinctively whis-

pers a blessing on his merry, handsome face, and the men are equally ready to avow their conviction that "t' young Squire looks iv'ry inch a Englishman ! furrin' parts ha'n't spiled *him* !"

The Rector and Alice are waiting on the doorstep to receive them ; behind are Mr. Tooke and Edward, together with Mrs. Hawkesworth, poor thing, and all her children ; and the embracing and handshaking, mutual inquiries and congratulations, are overpowering.

At length, the ringing of the first bell allows the young men a little respite, and Arnold's eager questions with regard to letters stand a chance of being attended to. He has not heard from home for more than three months, and is naturally anxious. There are three letters for him, one from St. Petersburg, dated June ; another from his mother, written about the same time ; and a third, which has arrived only a few days before, from Berlin. As soon as he is safely alone in the comfortable chamber allotted to him, and the Rector has passed on with Robert, Arnold breaks the seal of the first.

"My dear Arnold :—

"Although I wrote you so recently, I think it only right to inform you at once of all that I have done, in your name as well as my own, in arranging the affairs of our dear old friend

["Our dear old friend !"—merciful heavens ! could he mean the Director ? "In your name as well as

my own!" And a faintness crept over Arnold, as he recollected that in Herr Bergmann's will he and Wallraf were appointed joint executors.] . . .

"But in the first place, as it is quite possible that my former letter may have miscarried, I will briefly repeat the substance of it.

"For some time past, it seems, poor Bergmann had been in a very depressed state of mind, partly owing, I fear, to the disappointment with regard to Mala, partly, also, to rumours that had reached him in connection with the banking-house of Braun, Brothers, with whom, as you know, all he had was lodged. On Thursday, the 12th of May, he received an official intimation that they had stopped payment. He appeared to bear the news well; indeed, Fräulein Martha avers that he was unusually cheerful, and went to bed early. Next morning he did not come downstairs. Mala knocked several times at his door, which was fastened inside, but received no answer, and about twelve o'clock, becoming alarmed, they had the door forced open. They found him in his chair at his desk—just as he had seated himself the evening before to write to you—the pen in his hand, the letter half finished—but what need to repeat the harrowing words?—you know all.

"The kindest, best-hearted, most unselfish of men is gone. The blow will be as heavy to you, Arnold, as to me; he has left a blank that will never

be filled up to either of us. My heart bleeds when I think of the solitariness of his last moments; he, who spent his life in doing good to others, to be alone, perfectly alone, at such a time! My only consolation is the assurance of the medical men, that death must have been instantaneous, and the result of the heart-complaint under which he laboured so long; and the calm, peaceful expression of the features seems to warrant us in believing that he passed away without a pang. The event created a profound sensation in the town; few have ever left behind so many friends—so many mourners. But why dilate upon this to you, who knew him as well as I? I have the last letter to you carefully in my possession. I know you will value it, therefore I could not incur the risk of sending it over the world after you. I arrived in Städtlein on the Saturday; it was Mala who telegraphed for me. Poor Fräulein Martha, as you may imagine, did not prove equal to the emergency. It was well for both that your mother was at hand to act for them. I have examined poor Bergmann's affairs. Fortunately there is enough left to provide for Mala and her aunt in a quiet way. ['Arnold afterwards discovered that in the failure of Braun's Bank, the ladies had lost everything, and that Wallraf's "provision" was a sum the reverse of insignificant placed by himself to their credit at his own bankers.'] I have advised their continuing to reside in the old house until Mala's marriage.

"I must tell you in confidence, Arnold, that I do not like Lucien's conduct since his uncle's death. You are at a distance, and it may appear cruel to alarm you ; still, I think you ought to know exactly how matters are. When I spoke to him about their engagement, and asked him to fix a time for the marriage (not necessarily an *early* date—I merely begged him to appoint a definite time that the poor child might know what she had to expect), he returned very evasive answers, would promise nothing, and in short, behaved in so curious, and I may say *insulting* a way, that I could with difficulty refrain from kicking him out of the house. Since my return, my suspicions have received fresh confirmation. Instead of remaining with Mala, at the very time when she requires his presence most (for her father's death has been a great shock to her), he has left Städtlein and gone to Berlin. They say, this step was the result of annoyance at not being offered the directorship of the Conservatorium ; but this I can hardly believe, as he must know that the Committee could not elect so young a man. I may mention that I have accepted the post myself, and shall be glad to turn my back on St. Petersburg in September. Would that I had never seen it ! I shall never cease to reproach myself for having deserted Bergmann. You left to fulfil a duty. I !—Well ! it is too late to repair the past.

"To return to Lucien. What can be the meaning

of this proceeding? Have you ever observed anything in him that would lead you to suppose he intended breaking off with Mala? Anything, more particularly, with regard to your sister, the one in Berlin? Aunt Martha gave me a long account of the last Carnival ball, where, it seems, he became acquainted with her, paid marked attention to her the whole evening, and utterly neglected Mala. Are you aware of this? I must confess that Lucien is a riddle to me, first exerting himself to the utmost to win the poor child's affections, and now trifling with them in this way. I tremble for her happiness—she is as much infatuated about him as ever. If you have any influence over your sister, would it not be well to put her on her guard? Lucien, in my eyes, is utterly devoid of any quality that can command esteem, and yet, they say, he plays the devil among the women, and does what he likes with them. It seems to me, that not one of the sex is capable of discerning truth from falsehood; the more a man tramples on her and deceives her, the more a woman clings to him.

“But I must not get upon my old theme! I wish you were safely home, Arnold. I never was so perplexed in my life. We can neither insist upon Mala's giving Lucien up, nor force him to keep his engagement. I believe Lucien Descroix to be quite capable of breaking Mala's heart, because her fortune is gone; and equally capable of repeating the process

on your sister, because she happens to be the reputed heiress of a wealthy man, and sister to the next heir to an English baronetcy. I only hope that time may *not* prove the correctness of these views. Tell Sir Robert not to forget his old persecutor, and write without delay, Arnold,

“To your attached friend,

“ALEXIS WALLRAF.”

The stunned consciousness with which the news of his second father's death had stricken Arnold, deepened into indignant wrath as he perused the latter part of Wallraf's communication, and, with apprehension amounting to positive pain, he tore open the note from Berlin. As he surmised, it was from his sister, but Mariechen had favoured him with so few letters, that her handwriting was by no means familiar to him. It ran as follows :—

“Two o'Clock, A.M.

“Dear Arnold,

“As you have not deigned to take any notice of my former effusion, you shall not be *bored* by a long letter this time. In fact, I hardly know why I write to you at all! I should certainly like to have heard from you full particulars of Lucien Descroix's engagement to Fräulein Bergmann, especially as there is a sort of coolness between mamma and me (I'm sure I don't know why!) which prevents my getting any information from her. Not that I doubt M. Descroix's word! but he is in love, very

much in love, with my unworthy self, and I fear lest his affection for me should have blinded him to the injustice he would be doing poor Mala, by breaking off his engagement with her—if they ever were really and truly engaged. He assures me they were *not*, that it was a mere ‘boyish fancy,’ and as I have heard nothing to the contrary, either from you or any one else, I do not see that I am bound to stretch a point of honour too far. And yet—and yet, Arnold, I wish you had answered me! I know you think me a frivolous, heartless girl, but I am not so bad as you imagine. My own love for Lucien shows me what Mala must be suffering, if he has left her for me. I have no reason to doubt him, but—oh, Arnold! write to me and assure me on this point.

“MARIECHEN.”

It was evident to her brother that Mariechen had penned these hasty lines in a fit of penitence, and they were all that was required to strengthen his conviction of Lucien’s villainy. He must go to Städtlein—he must return home at once; and the agony of his fear lest the daughter of his benefactor—his own, ah! how fondly cherished love!—should be sacrificed by his sister, gave him force to combat with his grief—to put it aside for the time.

There was a light tap at the door, and Robert entered. Arnold advanced to meet him, resolute and composed.

“Robert!” he said, “I must leave this at once.

Is there any means by which I can get to London to-night?"

"Leave this to-night!" echoed Robert, breathless with consternation; and the question was repeated in the same tone by the Rector, who had come in behind him.

"Yes! the Director is—is——" and unable to pronounce the fatal word, Arnold pushed the letters towards Robert, turned abruptly away, and buried his face in his hands.

Robert read them hurriedly through with a blanching cheek: "Oh, Arnold!" he cried, "my poor, poor Arnold! What shall I do for you? How shall I comfort you? Dear, sweet, little Mala!—The mean scoundrel! What *is* to be done?"

"What has happened, Robert?" said the Rector, impatiently, unable to decipher the German characters.

Robert briefly put his uncle in possession of the circumstances. The Rector went up to Arnold, and laid his hand on his shoulder:

"My dear boy! sorry as I am to lose you, there is no help for it—you must go."

Arnold rose, his momentary agitation had subsided, and he repeated his inquiry as to the means of reaching London.

Mr. Chesney looked at his watch. "You will get to Dover in time for the first packet—but there is not a minute to lose. Robert, just order a carriage to be

got ready directly, and tell Marsden to send some dinner up here."

"It is not necessary, uncle Stephen."

"I insist upon it," said the Rector; "you have a long journey before you, and a trying ordeal—you must eat to keep up your strength," and in his usual practical way the necessary preparations were rapidly made. Arnold forced himself to swallow a few mouthfuls to please his friends, who were little less concerned than himself.

"And thus ends your first visit to England!" said Robert, mournfully. "I shall never get through Friday without you, Arnold. It will seem like a mockery to me, so long as you are in this trouble. I shall postpone it. It's all the same when the festivities come off!"

"On no account!" Arnold rejoined earnestly, "you must not put it off for my sake. I do not know when I shall be able to come back. This is not the affair of a day. Promise me, Robert, that you will not wait for me;" and Robert gave his promise with great reluctance.

The carriage was announced, Arnold's luggage replaced, and he went downstairs. Mr. Chesney had informed no one of his intended departure except Alice, and she alone was in the hall.

"Dear Arnold," she said, with swimming eyes, "you will write to me?"

Arnold forgot his trouble for a moment. "Oh,

Alice," he said, "it is hard, hard to part from you at once. I *will* write to you. I will write what I meant to have told you here, and you will answer me?"

What Alice said we do not know, but certain it is that Arnold carried with him on his journey a hope sufficiently bright to sustain him through whatever trials he might have to encounter.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MALA.

MALA sits by the window of the study in the old house, in her father's favourite place, and gazes dreamily out upon the river glancing in the light of the setting sun. Her features have lost their child-like contour, and the large, dark eyes have a pensive, mournful expression strange to them in former days. Near her is aunt Martha. She, too, is changed; care has left its footprints on her gentle face, and many times she pauses in her work to stroke her darling's clustering curls, with a tender solicitude that reveals a world of unspoken anxiety.

"Aunt," said Mala, suddenly breaking the silence, "do you know what day this is?"

Aunt Martha made no reply, but her start, and the suspicious velocity with which she plied her needles, proved that she knew only too well to what Mala alluded.

"It is the thirtieth—my birthday. Do you recollect this day last year? How happy we all were at the Weinberg! Poor Arnold! do you know, auntie, I once fancied that he loved me?"

"Once fancied!" retorted aunt Martha, hotly; "anybody with eyes might have seen it years ago!"

"Yes, but I do not mean in that way. Something he once said to me—about a bunch of grapes—made me think that he wanted me to love him as—as I love Lucien."

"Of course he did, and so did your poor dear father and I. Oh, Mala, if you had but chosen him instead of ——"

Mala put her little hand before her aunt's lips. "You must not say so now, auntie dear. What *is*, is for the best. It is natural to me to love Lucien, and so it *must* be right.—They say, marriages are made in heaven.—I don't know why I should love him best though, after all," she continued, reflectively, more to herself than to Fräulein Martha. "It is not because he is so handsome. I don't care for people's looks; and besides, Arnold's eyes are finer than his. Nor yet because he has genius; Arnold's music pleases me far better. I think I must love him because no one else does. It began with that, at least. Do you remember, auntie, when he first came to our house, a tiny, little mite of a boy?"

"Don't I?" said the aunt, with a sigh; "you were little better than a baby at the time, but you took him under your especial care; you always stood like a good angel between poor Gottlob and him."

"I wonder if Lucien ever thinks of these old times?"

"I don't suppose he does, my dear, since he has forgotten your birthday," said aunt Martha, with a jerk that broke her worsted.

"Of course, so soon after what has happened, we could not have celebrated our betrothal; but he might have written me just one little line to show that he did not forget what was to have taken place to-day. Don't you think so, auntie?"

"Don't ask me what I think, child, or I shall make you angry again by wishing you would give him up. Ah! if Arnold were only here!"

"Yes," said Mala, joining in the sigh; "nothing would be so hard to bear, or so perplexing, if we had but him to consult. I can almost fancy I see his dear, grave old face bending over the desk there.—I hope he will marry his cousin," she added suddenly. "Alice could not fail to make him happy. She is far better suited to him than I, for she knows so much." There was a pause, and Mala continued, abruptly, "Aunt, do you think that Lucien can be acting thus because he is ashamed of me—of my ignorance?"

"I do not see how that can be possible," replied Fräulein Martha, stopping her busy fingers. "To be sure, you have not learned much from books, but Wallraf taught you a great deal—and Arnold. And then, you know French and English."

"Yes," said Mala, pensively, "I have done my best—all I *could* do without displeasing papa—that

I might not disgrace him in any way. But still, Mariechen is very accomplished."

"No, no, my poor lamb! if you knew nothing at all, it would still be no excuse for Lucien. Men do not cease to love a girl, because she is not accomplished. There is some other reason for his conduct."

"Can it be, aunt, because we are no longer rich? I never dared think so before. I could not bear to imagine that he loved me less than—than money; but now, he has not written me!" and the tears rolled slowly down her cheeks.

"Perhaps he is planning a delightful surprise for you, Mala; perhaps he will make his appearance to-night, as he did on the Weinberg last year," said Fräulein Martha, with an attempt at cheerfulness belied by the sob in her voice.

Mala shook her head; the hope had too often proved fallacious for her to find any comfort in it now. "Do you think I should write to him, aunt, and ask him plainly if he is waiting to be a little richer before he keeps his promise? I would beg him not to do so. I would tell him, that I do not fear poverty. What would there be to fear in it with him by my side?—And have I not a voice? Even Wallraf once declared that I could make a fortune rapidly, if I chose.—Ah! how I would work for Lucien, auntie! how joyful my life would be! how different from this weary, weary longing and

hoping, and disappointment! What although we were obliged to deny ourselves many luxuries that we are accustomed to now? What would *that* be compared to this constant pain at my heart, gnawing, gnawing perpetually? Did I ever tell you of it, aunt? It must be hunger—*mind*-hunger. I am starving for a sight of him—for a line from him. I wonder if he feels this too?"

"If he did, my poor Mala, he would not remain so long away."

"Aunt Martha, I will not have you doubt Lucien!" cried the unhappy girl, with a petulant burst of tears. "*If* he feels thus!—of course he does. He is longing to be with me, as I am to be with him. You *make* Lucien insincere; everybody distrusts him—everybody doubts him except me."

A rapid knock at the street-door startled both the ladies.

"There he is, Mala! I told you he would come."

"It is not he!" said Mala, wiping away her tears; "it is not his knock—not his step," and the correctness of her ear was confirmed by the announcement that a stranger, a lady, was in the drawing-room, and had asked specially for Fräulein Mala.

It was now nearly dark, and trusting to this to hide the traces of her agitation, Mala went downstairs. By the window she perceived a lady—tall, elegant, richly-dressed, who turned at the sound of footsteps, and raised her veil.

"Mariechen!" and Mala involuntarily retreated a step or two: she who had seldom been absent from her thoughts of late now stood before her. What could be the object of her visit?

"You are surprised, dear Mala, are you not?" said Marie, and taking the young girl by both hands (Marie was much the taller of the two), she drew her gently to the window, and looked at her earnestly for a moment.

Mala, disconcerted, cast her eyes down; Mariechen's manner puzzled her; she fancied her tears were discovered.

"I am very rude," Marie went on, kissing her; "but you must forgive me, my darling. You are so much altered from the *Thekla* of my recollection, that I could hardly persuade myself it was she who came in."

"You also are altered, Mariechen," said Mala gently, for even the dim twilight revealed but too plainly hard lines about the mouth, and a fixed, stern purpose in the eye, that had been wanting to the brilliant Marie of the Carnival ball.

"Am I?" she replied, with a forced laugh, which sounded in Mala's ear almost like a sigh; "it is only within the last few days then! I am here on a short visit to my mother," she continued, with affected cheerfulness; "the first I have paid her since I left Kirchenstein. Very shocking, is it not? The fact is, we don't *draw* well together—*assimilate* or whatever you like to call it—and so, we are

better apart. I arrived by the four o'clock train from Berlin, and have lost not a minute in coming to you. But you don't appear glad to see me, you little fairy?—Are you not?"

"Very glad!" said Mala, awaking with a start from the dreaminess which seemed to overpower her unconsciously; "you must not heed me, dear Mariechen!—since our great trouble we have lived so much alone, that I have almost forgotten how to meet strangers."

"*Strangers!* you don't consider me a stranger, surely?" exclaimed Marie, repeating her caress with the same strange, wistful glance," Arnold's sister ought to be yours, you know!"

"Dear Arnold! how we are longing for him to come home! Have you heard again from him, Mariechen? Has the time been fixed for their return?"

"*You ask me this, Mala?*" said Mariechen, smiling. "I think *you* should be the first to hear anything concerning Arnold!"

"No," replied Mala simply, "I have not seen Madame Müller, your mother, this week."

Marie looked scrutinizingly at the sweet face, and a shade of uncertainty crossed her own. "Do you know," she said, "I have lately made the acquaintance of a friend of yours, or rather, I should say, renewed acquaintance with him—Monsieur Descroix. You recollect? I met him here at Herr von Holz's ball last Carnival."

"My cousin Lucien! I wonder he has never mentioned that in his letters to me."

"You correspond, then?"

"Certainly!" Mala replied, wonderingly; "do you not know that we are engaged? Has he not said anything about it to you?"

"Now that you remind me, he *did* allude to it once," said Mariechen, with an effort; "but I was not aware that the engagement had been made known?"

"Only to our friends," Mala replied, with a faint blush. "This was to have been our *Verlobungstag*—if—if——"

"I understand," said Marie, quickly; "and doubtless Monsieur Descroix's present visit to Städtlein has been for the purpose of arranging for this at a later period?"

"His visit to Städtlein!" echoed Mala, in bewilderment. "Is Lucien here, Mariechen? Has he left Berlin?"

"Yes, a week ago. My dear child! Have you not seen him?"

The dulness of despair stole over Mala, as she repeated feebly,—

"A week in Städtlein! He has been a week here, and has not come to me!"

"I do not know how long he has been *here*, dear Mala," corrected Mariechen, with something of tenderness in her voice, although she kept her search-

ing glance on her companion, as if desirous of reading her very thoughts. "He left Berlin a week ago, but it is quite possible he may have stayed somewhere *en route*—gone to see his old friends at Wilhelmstadt—or, fifty things!"

Mala drew a deep breath.

"Ah!" she said, "how you frightened me! I thought he must be ill—wounded; that he had met with an accident—only this, you know, *could* prevent his coming to me."

Marie rose hastily.

"Adieu, Mala! I must go now. I promised my mother not to remain more than a few minutes."

"Won't you come and see aunt Martha?"

"Not to-night. We shall see each other tomorrow.—Love me, Mala!" she suddenly cried, and clasped the astonished girl to her; "promise me that you will love me—if not for my own sake, at least for Arnold's."

"I do love you already," Mala replied, as she returned the embrace, and without another word Mariechen was gone. With much inward wonderment, Mala went upstairs to communicate to her aunt the strange, perplexing news regarding Lucien, and to conjecture every possible reason (except the right one) for the unexpected visit.

And what was the cause of Mariechen's visit?—If we look in upon her a few hours later, as she sits alone in her room, we shall discover it in that little

charred fragment which lies before her on the table. It is a scrap of paper—the portion of a letter used by Lucien to light his cigar the last evening he spent in her uncle's house at Berlin. His purpose served, he had thrown away the remnant, trusting to the flame's devouring its contents. Days after, Mariechen had found it; the tiny, feminine handwriting attracted her jealous notice, and she read words that seemed to scorch her very soul:

“Lucien! Lucien! when am I to see you again? to hear from you? This suspense is killing me—six long weeks, and no letter! The thirtieth of the month will soon be here—surely you will come to me then? Our engagement——” * * * *

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CRUSHED VIOLET.

THE early sun had just risen to gild the church spires, and banish the grey, uncertain dawn with a flood of light, when two figures might have been seen entering the old town by the south-gate. One was a young girl, a lady; the other a tall, middle-aged woman evidently belonging to the lower orders. Rapidly threading their way along the narrow, deserted lanes, they turned into a fashionable quarter, halted in a broad, new street, where they entered a large house, and ascending the stairs, paused on the second étage, and knocked at the door. The inmates were apparently still wrapped in slumber, for two or three loud peals had to be repeated in succession before sounds within were heard. Finally the door was opened by Madame Müller herself, in dressing-gown and slippers. At the sight of the early visitors, she started in amazement: "Mala!"

"Yes, it is I, dear Madame Müller!" replied Mala, or she indeed it was; "I could not sleep; I want to see Mariechen; I must speak to her—instantly!" and she clasped her hands with an air of entreaty,

which, together with her pale, excited look, went to Madame Müller's heart.

"By all means, my dear! but you will have to rouse her. I do not think she is awake yet. There! the third door on the right!" and, as the young girl hastily entered the room indicated, she turned to her companion, inquiring anxiously, "Ursula! what is the matter? what has happened?"

"O ma'am! O Frau Müller! that I should live to see this day!" ejaculated the faithful creature, as the tears ran down her cheeks. "'Tis I who have done it! 'tis all my fault! I fear my young lady will go out of her mind. She has not slept a moment, all night long walking up and down her room as if she was distracted; and, this morning, the first thing I saw was she standing by my bedside, dressed as you see her now. 'Ursula!' said she, 'I want to go out; but don't waken aunt Martha!' So I got up at once, thinking that a walk by the river might soothe her. I had no idea we were coming here," and Ursula began to sob afresh.

"Calm yourself, I beg of you, Ursula!" said Madame Müller, in real distress, "and let me know what has happened."

"'Tis all my doing!" reiterated the woman; "I shall never be able to forgive myself as long as I live. I was out last night on an errand—and passing by the Bath Hotel, whom should I see sitting at one of the windows but Monsieur Lucien—Fräulein

Mala's husband that's to be—you know, ma'am. Of course, I was not a little surprised, because we all imagined him at Berlin; but it struck me that he had come on purpose for the Fräulein's birthday (that was yesterday, her nineteenth birthday), and I looked up at him, expecting that he would give me a smile or a nod (you see, ma'am, I've been in the family seven-and-thirty years come next Easter, and have known them both since they were children), but he appeared not to notice me, and looked straight over me, if you can understand, ma'am—though I'm perfectly sure he saw me all the while. This seemed to me such curious conduct in him (for he used to be an affable, free-spoken gentleman enough, though never, to my thinking, like Herr Arnold), that I went right in to the hotel (one of the waiters is my cousin) and asked how long he had been stopping there, and he told me, a week. I thought to myself—a whole week in the town, and not one visit to our young lady! And I went straight home and found Fräulein Martha; for it seemed to me she ought to know, that she might write to Herr von Wallraf or Herr Arnold. The room was perfectly dark, she was sitting in the study, and there appeared to be no one else with her; so I told her at once all that was on my mind—like a fool. If I hadn't been so excited, I might have noticed that she tried to stop me two or three times—but—but," (here Ursula's voice became choked by sobs) "I wouldn't be stopped—I thought it was

only some of Fräulein Martha's queer ways; and whenever I had done, there came a cry from behind the window-curtain, as of some one in pain, and there was my poor lamb fallen down—she had heard every word I said, and fainted right away”——

The door of Marie's room suddenly opened, and Ursula's lamentations subsided, as both the girls appeared with their bonnets on, for Mariechen had also passed the night in wakefulness, and had merely thrown herself on her bed towards morning: “Mother,” she said hurriedly, “Mala has asked me to go out with her for a little. I shall not be long.”

“My dear child, it is not yet six o'clock.”

“Oh! do not keep us, dear Madame Müller!” Mala exclaimed, throwing herself on her friend's neck; “we are only going a little way—are we not, Mariechen?” and as if fearful of being detained, she beckoned to Ursula, and ran downstairs.

“Be careful of the poor child!” said Madame Müller in a ferment of anxiety. Mariechen pressed her mother's hand, and followed her companion, who had already gained the street.

The two girls walked rapidly along, each apparently too much engrossed by her own thoughts to speak, until they reached the Bath Hotel. Early as it was, the place seemed astir, for an important public meeting was to be held in the town hall at ten o'clock, and visitors were expected from the provinces by the first trains. Thus, the appearance of two

ladies at an hour so unwonted was hardly noticed; and in answer to Marie's inquiry for Monsieur Descroix, they were shown into a little salon, communicating by folding-doors with the sleeping-apartment appropriated to that gentleman, a fact of which they were made aware by whistled snatches of operatic airs proceeding from behind the partition.

"Dear Mariechen!" whispered Mala faintly, "you are strong—stronger than I.—You will not leave me?—You will help me?"

"I will help you, my darling," replied Mariechen; and with a hurried embrace, she let down her veil and withdrew, in accordance with their preconcerted arrangement, to the farthest corner of the room, so as, if possible, to escape Lucien's notice at first—Ursula meanwhile remained outside.

For more than half an hour they sat thus, motionless, expectant, hearing no sound but the beating of their own hearts and the footsteps in the adjoining room. Seven o'clock struck. In a few minutes the inner door was hastily opened, and Lucien entered, humming the refrain of a gay *chanson*. He stopped short, for the intimation that a *stranger* wished to see him had not led him to expect a lady.

"Madame," he said courteously, "to what am I to attribute the honour of this early visit?"

Mala turned: "Lucien!"

He started: "Good heavens! Mala!"

There was silence for a few moments, during

which Lucien by degrees recovered his composure, and attempted to laugh off his embarrassment: "Why, Mala!" he exclaimed, with forced gaiety, "you have quite shaken my nerves—for one day, at least. What do you imagine people will say of me, receiving a visit from a young lady before I am out of bed in the morning? You have stolen a march upon me this time. I was just coming round to you, as soon as I had swallowed my coffee, to offer you my congratulations. This is your fête day, is it not? Come! sit down by me, and let me feast my eyes on that dear little face!"

Mala still remained standing, and the sorrowful gravity of her countenance did not change in the least: "Lucien!" she said, "you did not write to me that you intended coming to Städtlein—you did not lead me to expect to see you here."

"Certainly not, my darling! I meant to surprise you, as I did last year. I stole a march upon somebody else then—ha, ha! You like surprises, don't you?"

"You have been here a week, Lucien—eight days; and yet I have not seen you once!"

"Business must be attended to before pleasure. You know the old saw, Mala? 'Business first—pleasure afterwards'—and even Love must submit at times to have the wings of his impatience clipped. I really have not had a spare moment that I could call my own since I left Berlin. So,

don't be offended, little dove. See!" and he crossed over to her, "look at this! and judge whether I have been thinking of you, or not!" As he spoke, Lucien drew a little box from his pocket, out of which he produced a magnificent armlet—a snake with glistening emerald eyes—and proceeded to fasten it on her wrist.

With a visible shudder, Mala took the ill-omened toy, and thrust it aside: "Dear Lucien! you know that I do not care for such things just now. Let us be serious. I have come here—as you say, I ought not to have done it; people will talk—will judge me—harshly, perhaps; but I cannot help it. I am miserable, Lucien! I am wretched; my life is a burden to me, until one doubt is solved. Lucien! I have a question to ask you—one question—will you answer me—honestly?" and she looked into his face, as though she would read his very soul.

"Certainly, little catechist! a dozen, if you like!" laughed Lucien, but he evaded her eye.

Mala was silent for a moment, as though unable to frame the inquiry she desired to put, and she trembled in every limb. Perhaps she expected that he would come to her assistance, would satisfy the doubt before it had crossed her lips. If so, she was mistaken, for he continued to tap the floor with his foot in a light, nonchalant way, and a half-smile of puzzled curiosity hovered about his mouth. At length he said impatiently: "Well, Mala? what

is this wonderful secret that has caused you to break through the nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine laws of propriety, and venture here in defiance of the world and his wife?"

"Only, Lucien, that I might ask you—if you remembered—that yesterday was my birthday?" faltered Mala, "that I am now nineteen—the time dear papa fixed for our engagement— — — Do you intend to fulfil it, Lucien?"

"Why, Mala! four months after your father's death! Surely it is too soon to begin to think of such a festivity!"

"There need be no festivity," said Mala faintly; and added, with the energy of desperation, as Lucien's indifference became more apparent to her, "You are trifling with me, Lucien!—I know you are! You no longer love me—you are seeking a pretext to break off our union—you were coming to-day to tell me this!"

"The fact is, Mala!" said Lucien, abruptly changing his tactics, "your coming here in this way, and demanding an explanation, will save a world of unpleasantness and—and bother. I own that my conduct must appear incomprehensible to you; but I've been devilish hard-pressed of late, Mala. I've been worried out of my very existence, nearly. Come, Mala! you are a sensible little girl! you can appreciate a difficulty. Sit down here by me, and I will make a clean breast of my position to you, for you are an angel, if ever there was one."

Mala suffered him to lead her to the couch, and to retain her hand; but her colourless face and quivering lip showed that what little strength she had was fast ebbing.

"Mala! I am head over ears in debt! Nay, do not start! That is not the worst—my creditors are growing impatient—they besiege me right and left—I hardly know which way to turn; if I do not find some immediate means of extrication, I may be consigned to a debtor's prison before the week is over," and he ground his teeth.

"Dear Lucien! I am not penniless; every farthing I have shall be yours! Aunt Martha—yes! I am sure aunt Martha will help you. She can live with us afterwards, you know!"

"You dear, simple little darling! Your little mite doubled, trebled, quadrupled, would be but a drop in the ocean. You don't know the world, Mala—nor the expenses a young man incurs in spite of himself."

"True!" said Mala, hesitatingly; "but if your creditors could only be induced to wait, Lucien, I would work with you—for you. You know what my voice is—what it could be made."

"Yes, but, dear child! that would be the work of years. What I want is relief *now*—at once."

Mala's heart sank; the generous offers that had come so warmly from it were despised; and a chill fell upon her.

"There is a way out of this labyrinth," he began again, "and only *one* way. You would like to see me succeed in life, would you not, Mala? You would like to see me prosperous, happy, famous? It would break your heart to find me in some wretched den, pining away my days like any common felon, a ruined, miserable outcast——"

Lucien paused to observe the effect of his eloquence, but Mala's face was impassive, save for the nervous twitching of the mouth. "And yet, Mala, this must be my fate—I must bid farewell to all my hopes in life—if *you* will not take pity upon me. Yes, Mala! you are the innocent cause of my misery. When I tell you, that but for you, I might have at my disposal a princely fortune, I am sure you are too generous, too noble, to insist upon the sacrifice. I see you have guessed my meaning, Mala! You will not keep me to an engagement which, after all, was contracted when you were a mere child, which has never been fully ratified?"

Again Lucien paused, and glanced at his companion, but there was no response; Mala was looking straight before her with a dull hopelessness, a despairing desolation that might have moved a heart of stone. But Lucien had no pity. Satisfied that silence implied consent; that his appeal to her feelings had been successful, he continued: "That is my own Mala! my dear, little, self-sacrificing angel! Yes, Mala! I will frankly tell you all,

since you bear it so well. I am engaged to an heiress, a charming girl—I am sure you will love her. She will never be to me what you are, dearest! but I also must sacrifice a little ;” and he lifted her hand to his lips.

Mala started, wrenched it from his grasp, and tottering in her feebleness a few steps towards the silent, veiled figure in the corner, extended her arms imploringly towards her friend.

“Mariechen !” she exclaimed with a sharp, sudden cry, and would have fallen, had not Mariechen sprung forward and caught her in her arms.

Leaving her to the tender care of Ursula, who had hurried in alarmed, Mariechen hastily threw back her veil, and turned to Lucien. The living Nemesis stood before him, and he put his hand before his eyes to shut out the sight.

“You are surprised to see me here, Monsieur Descroix ?” said Marie, slowly, with a bitter laugh. “Next time that you attempt to deceive a girl, be more careful of the letters of her predecessor !” and she flung the half-burnt fragment disdainfully before him. “Do you think me a fool, Lucien, that you have attempted this double game with me ? *This* is the childish fancy, is it ?” and she pointed to the senseless form on the couch. “This is the affection, the passion for *Arnold*—the existence of which you persuaded me into believing ? You coward ! You false heart !—*you* call yourself a *man* !—*you*, devoid

of every feeling of honour, of gratitude, of justice ! —*you*, who have waited until your benefactor was silent in the grave, that you might with impunity desert his orphan daughter — break your word, solemnly pledged — break her heart ! For what do you take me, Lucien, that you imagine I could be a party to an act like this ? God forgive me for the share I have already had in it ! Do you think I could build *my* life-happiness on the ruin of *hers* ? — Mala, Mala ! henceforth you shall be my care,” Mariechen continued, the tears streaming down her cheeks ; ” we will live for each other ; ” and suddenly drawing herself up to her full height, she turned upon Lucien with a vehement burst of anger : “ Begone, sir ! quit this house instantly ! and beware how you cross my path again, here, or in Berlin, for I will denounce you to the world in your true character,” and Lucien, literally struck dumb by the unexpected retribution that had fallen upon him, cowered beneath her scornful glance, and retreated towards the door.

His progress was suddenly arrested, however ; a strong arm forced him back, and looking round, he found himself face to face with Arnold.

“ You do not escape me thus, Monsieur Descroix ! ” said the latter, sternly ; “ Before you leave this room, I will have an explanation of all that has taken place during my absence.”

“ Who are you, Arnold Müller, that you presume

to interfere with me?" shrieked Lucien, quivering with passion.

"Mala's guardian — Mariechen's brother! — you lying, perjured scoundrel! I—" Arnold stopped abruptly, his hand relaxed its grasp of Lucien's arm, he perceived for the first time what had taken place.

"Merciful Heaven! Mala here! I am too late! Mala! — my love! — my darling! — speak to me; Mala!" And Arnold knelt by the side of the couch in an agony of grief, and buried his face in his hands. In the silence that ensued, Lucien seized the opportunity to escape, and no one tried to stop him.

They took the poor child home; for days she lay unconscious, hovering between life and death, and when at last the dark eyes looked out upon the world again, it was not with their former clear shining—for within, Memory had shrouded herself in a misty veil, and the light of Reason burned with a dim, uncertain flicker.

Epilogue.

EPILOGUE.

MORE than two years have passed since the events narrated in our last chapter. On a bright morning in May, the bell at Ilmington sends forth a merry peal; not very harmonious, certainly, but none the less joyous and noisy, since old Timothy Sykes has been superseded for the nonce by Jack Ellis, who has begged so hard to be allowed to ring Miss Alice into church for the last time as "*Miss Alice*," that Timothy (who is fast getting into his dotage) has not the heart to refuse, and, truth to tell, is quite content to sit at home in the chimney-corner, and indulge in sundry sips of hot elder-wine, part of the supply brought him by Miss Alice herself, that he may drink her health.

About ten o'clock the church begins to be thronged by young and old; you would think the whole village had turned out like one man. Miss Spry, radiant and blooming, presides at the organ, and John Edmunds varies the monotony of pulling out the stops for her, by whispering sly allusions to a time not so very far distant, when she and he will

have a special interest in the wedding-hymn about to be sung.

By and by, the "quality" begin to come. Sir Marmaduke, portlier, more dignified than ever—his disappointment in love has certainly not affected him outwardly. Lord and Lady Charleswood—the latter beaming with a happiness so perfect in its quiet serenity, that we, who have hitherto known her only under a cloud, hardly recognise her. Mr. and Mrs. Tooke—the former has actually left his umbrella at home, and thrusts his right-hand thumb in fidgety forlornness, every now and then, through the button-hole of his coat, as if in quest of his faithful comrade. The Hon. and Rev. Augustus Screw and lady, bristling in self-conscious importance. Members of the county families too numerous to particularise, and among the rest, Robert's mother and her second family; but as we have not found it necessary to introduce the lady into our story, we merely glance at her, see that she is round, rosy, and commonplace, and pass on.

The first detachment from the Rectory arrives—Robert escorting Madame Müller, and limping along the aisle with a bright face, which proves to the most uninitiated bystander that *he* is not the bridegroom. Behind them, Wallraf and Mariechen. Perhaps you expect the former to look very much out of his element at a wedding? No such thing! for one day at least the cynical weapons are laid

aside, Diogenes has abandoned his tub, and consents to enjoy himself like other mortals; although an occasional cloud flits across his happiness, as well as that of his companion, and a sigh rises unbidden at the recollection of a watcher in a lonely chamber far away.

At length, the general murmur of expectation announces the approach of the bride; and Alice—very pale, but beautiful in her own gentle purity, which encircles her as tenderly as does the soft falling lace—comes in leaning on her father's arm, followed by her snowy train, among whom we recognise Lili, and two of Captain Hawkesworth's little girls; the other five are strangers to us. The bridegroom has already taken his place before the altar, but he might have risen through the floor for aught any one knows to the contrary, so intent have all eyes been upon the centre of attraction. Robert stations himself behind him, with a "Now then, Arnold, don't be nervous!" and Edward commences the service.

What! Edward tie the knot that separates him from Alice for ever? Nonsense!—We beg your pardon, reader, it is true.

Alice's refusal has been to his perturbed spirit as the wood dropped into the waters of Marah; the poisonous agitation that threatened to make havoc of his happiness has subsided; his love for Alice still blooms in a corner of his heart, but it is

now no "root of bitterness," it sends forth no strange branches to disturb his peace, or stem the onward steadfast flow of his consecrated life. It is at his own request that he stands there, and joins the hands of the young people in an everlasting covenant; and Alice alone—with the exception, perhaps, of his mother—in all that hushed, silent throng, understands the meaning of the thrilling, tremulous earnestness with which he utters the words: "I pronounce that they be man and wife together." Edward has set his seal upon the extinction of the only earthly hope he ever cherished; henceforth, his little romance fades into the background, he lives but for others.

The congratulations are over. Alice Chesney no longer exists, save in the marriage-register of the parish of Ilmington; Alice Müller is driving homewards with her husband. Arnold takes her hand, "This day five years ago, Alice, do you recollect?" and Alice perceives that a second ring, a diamond surrounded by rubies, glistens on her finger beside the little golden circlet.

Having now disposed of our hero and heroine, we may leave them to each other, and to the enjoyment of the by no means contemptible fortune of Andreas Müller, the banker of Berlin, who had unexpectedly died, and equally unexpectedly left no Will, so that

his property was divided amongst his relations; and, in the end, poor Jacob Müller's children inherited what had been unjustly withheld from himself.

Of Robert, who, according to our title-page, may reasonably claim a little consideration, we have nothing very decided to relate; but we may hint that the rumours current regarding the existence of a mutual liking between him and Mariechen are not without foundation. Perhaps, when time has softened the recollection of past sorrows, the "liking" may give place to a deeper feeling.

And Dida? what of her? Does Robert ever give a thought to the old wild days, when the black eyes cast a spell over him—when he followed their erratic light, as one pursuing the *Ignis-fatuus*. No! Robert does not reflect very often upon this episode in his life; he is glad, as far as possible, to draw the curtain of forgetfulness over it. And besides, Dida is far away—on the other side of the Atlantic. Franz had been right in his conviction, she soon tired of the lawless life of her kinsfolk; theirs was not the freedom she had pined for. Like Dido of old, she crossed the seas; perchance, like her also to found a colony. Franz and she remained for a time in one of the German-speaking districts; afterwards, as they became accustomed to the climate, and the ways of their adopted country, moving farther and farther westward, until they finally settled in a spot where Dida's courage and energy will have full

scope, for it is rumoured that they are likely to be favoured with occasional visits from the native possessors of the soil. However, in a letter received from them on the morning of Arnold's wedding-day, they state that all is going on prosperously with them; that they hope soon to be able to persuade the old father and mother to join them; Dida adding that she "is sure the sight of the abundance in the new home would do much to sweeten the temper" of Frau Bekker.

And Mrs. Hawkesworth!—gentle, patient Fanny? Why was not she present at Alice's wedding? She had left some weeks previously to join her husband at Gibraltar. For her sake, Mr. Chesney provided for his worthless nephew by procuring him a commission in a regiment bound for foreign service, but he sternly refused ever to see him again, although he continues to act as the tenderest, most indulgent of guardians to the children during their absence from England, and little Dick especially bids fair to tyrannize over the Rector much after the fashion of the Tom of former days.

Mr. Tooke has quite got over the disappointment of Alice's choice, though he will never cease to wonder that his sagacity should have been so much at fault. His views with regard to Edward have taken a wider range, a higher flight; and the after-dinner naps in which he now indulges are disturbed by dreams of lawn sleeves, St. Paul's Cathedral, and a

certain Bench in the Upper House—dreams from which he awakes to find his son intent only upon following his vocation as a Fisher of Men, walking by the seashore like One of old.

And Mala? "Can you not make your story end happily?" asks some one.

Alas! dear reader, would that we could! but Truth is sterner than Fiction, and we can only tell you of a fragile, spirit-like form that still haunts the old house by the river, that wends its way, attended by a grey-haired companion, through the crowded streets, to knock at the door of a well-known house, and ask, day after day, with the same wistful eagerness: "Is he here?—Has he come yet?" and then turn away on hearing the pitiful answer: "Not yet!" with the same plaintive look, and the murmured "Perhaps to-morrow."

THE END.

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